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ENERGY POLICY IN 2011
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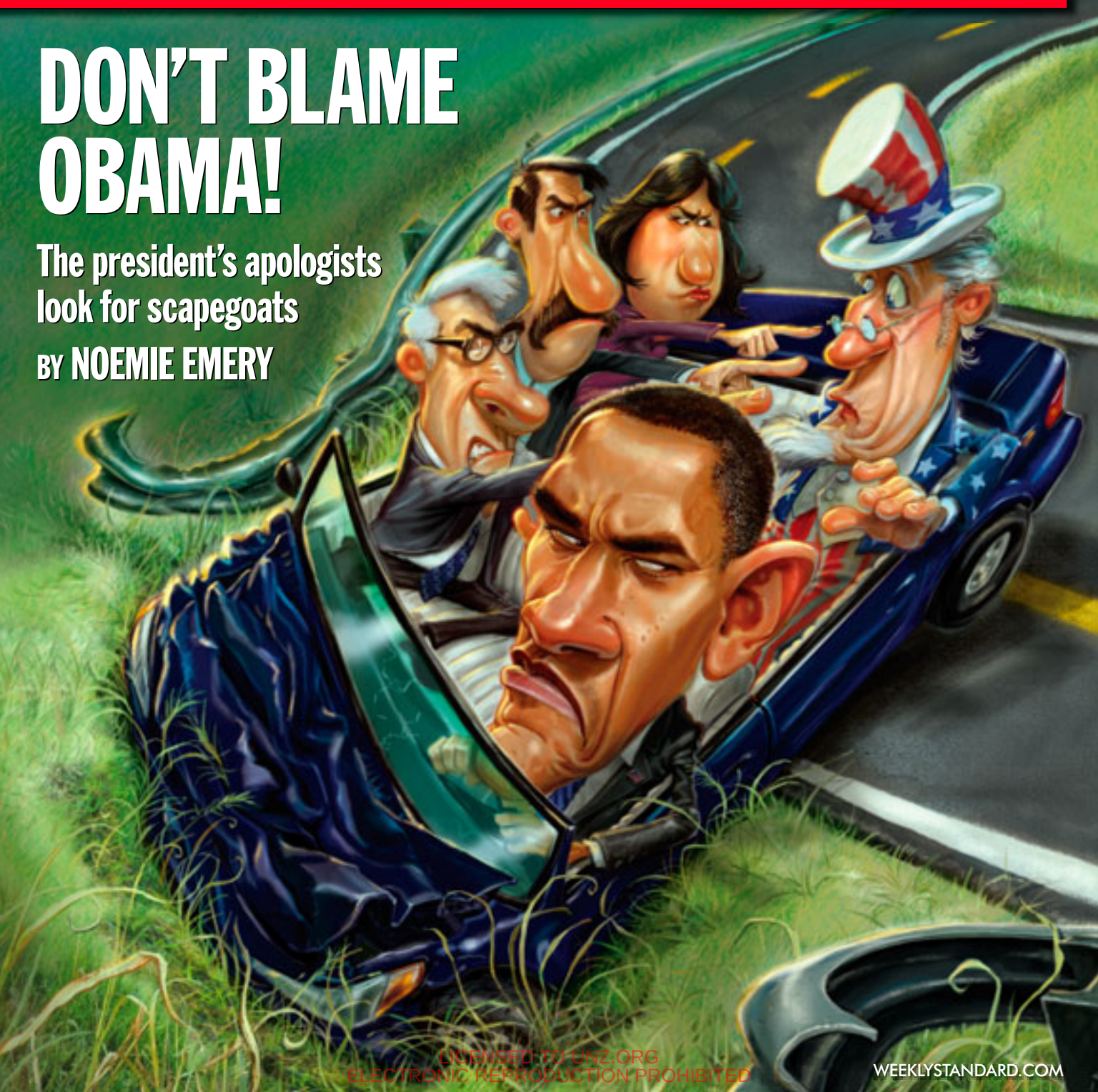
DON'T BLAME OBAMA!

The president's apologists look for scapegoats

BY NOEMIE EMERY



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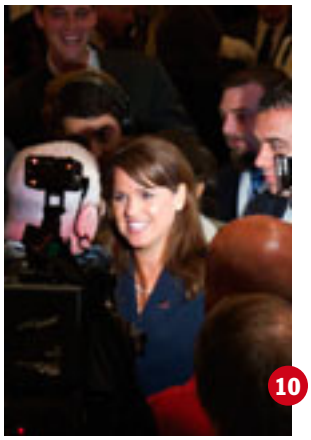
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The Captain Ahabs of the *Washington Post*

One of the stranger stories of recent times is the accidental shooting, on a hunting expedition in 2006, of Texas lawyer Harry Whittington by Vice President Dick Cheney. As everyone must know, Cheney aimed and fired his shotgun at quail on the wing and stray buckshot sprayed Whittington, who was standing nearby, in his face and chest. His injuries were serious, but not life-threatening, and Whittington recovered.

By all accounts, this was a tragic accident with a happy ending. Whittington, who is 82 years old and still carries some shot fragments in his body, seems to have made a full recovery. There is no evidence that alcohol was involved, or that either Whittington or Cheney was negligent or in violation of hunt protocol—although then-White House press secretary Scott McClellan did mistakenly suggest that Whittington might have been at fault for not announcing his proximity to Cheney. In any event, Whittington's behavior has never suggested anything remotely approaching a grievance against the man who (accidentally) wounded him. Indeed, on his release from the hospital at the time, he told reporters that "my family and I are deeply sorry for all that Vice President Cheney and his family have had to go through this week."

Which speaks to the strangeness of the story: While it was plainly evident that the shooting of Whittington was not deliberate, and involved neither malice nor malfeasance nor incompetence, the 2006 White House press corps couldn't let go of it. Were Cheney and Whittington old hunting companions, or casual political acquaintances? What had Cheney ingested on that day, and when did he ingest it? Why was there an hours-long delay between the incident and any announcement to the media? Was there a second gunman on the grassy knoll adjacent to the motorcade?

The White House released all available information, and Cheney himself was interviewed on Fox News to explain the sequence of events and take responsibility ("I am the guy who pulled the trigger") but that wasn't enough: The press, as often happens, was convinced that scandal existed where it clearly did not, and that something—anything—would turn up to throw Dick Cheney in the worst possible light. That can only explain the recent decision of the *Washington Post* to dispatch a reporter named Paul Farhi to Austin to interview Harry Whittington and write a "Style" front-page story that consumed one-and-a-half pages of newsprint in the paper's October 14 edition.

Dick Cheney, last week in California

NEWSCOM

Farhi made two discoveries: that Whittington's wounds may have been more serious than reported at the time, and that a lead pellet which pierced his larynx has, for medical reasons, never been removed. Otherwise, readers learned nothing new whatsoever—including the fact that Whittington remains reluctant to discuss the episode and its aftermath, bears no evident ill will against Cheney (with whom he remains in contact), and that he may well have been more traumatized by the hysterical press coverage than the injury.

So devoid of substance is the story that Farhi is obliged to introduce an element of meaningless suspense: Did Cheney ever apologize in private to Whittington for the accident? Cheney, of course, won't say—and neither will Whittington. From which the *Post* can only conclude that . . . what?

The Scrapbook doesn't know—and, in truth, cannot imagine what the *Post* was thinking, apart from resurrecting a nonstory from the Bush administration when inquiring minds might be wondering why it isn't concentrating its energies—and conferring a page-and-a-half of ever-diminishing news space—on, say, the present administration.

The Scrapbook does know, however, that accidents happen, and tragedies don't always have political ramifications. Everyone is aware that Laura Bush drove through an intersection, at age 17 in 1963, and hit another car, killing a high school friend. Is there any particular reason to obsess on what was clearly a painful incident in Mrs. Bush's admirable life? When Adlai Stevenson was running for president in 1952 it was revealed that, as a boy, he had accidentally shot and killed a 16-year-old girl while demonstrating the manual of arms with a loaded rifle. He did not know that the rifle was loaded, he was 12 years old, and the episode, which haunted Stevenson the rest of his life, was not a subject on which his opponent Dwight D. Eisenhower or the 1952 press corps chose to dwell in public.

In fact, the *Post*'s extensive coverage over the past four years of the Cheney-Whittington episode stands in curious contrast to its relative lack of interest in the shotgun death, in 1963, of Philip Graham, the *Post*'s publisher and husband of its proprietary heiress, Katharine Graham.

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Philip Graham was deeply disturbed, had been hospitalized during psychotic episodes, and evidently committed suicide. But there was an enormous legal battle after his death over the status of his will—contested by his widow—which, of course, set the course for the *Post*'s subsequent history, and affected not a few prominent lives and careers.

Now that Paul Farhi is between assignments, how about the full investigative treatment? ♦

The Culture of Complaint

THE SCRAPBOOK has been dipping into the new collection *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary* (PublicAffairs) and can highly recommend it. A tip of our homburg to editor Steven R. Weisman for including this letter of complaint from the late senator to Brooks Brothers, dated November 24, 1980:

> Sirs: As a customer of thirty-five years standing this spring (I bought my ensign's outfit from you!), I hope you won't mind this friendly "return." [The ensign's outfit refers to Moynihan's Navy duty from 1944-47.] As I have gotten older, with less time available for shopping, and somewhat more credit, I have taken to buying socks, shirts and sundries in rather large quantities. Such is your quality control that they tend to go on seemingly indestructible and then collapse in the manner of the one-horse shay [a reference to Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem, *The Wonderful "One-Hoss Shay"*].
>
> In just such a manner a complete wardrobe purchased for India [where Moynihan served as U.S. ambassador from 1973-75] lasted four and one-half years and then disappeared in a fortnight. The point of the tale is that last spring before a trip to the Middle East, I stopped at your downtown store and stocked up on various items. I bought one dozen socks, one of which I enclose. All of them developed holes within a month. Of the kind you will see. This is something I know you would want to know about, and which I would like made up for in whatever manner you think best.

THE SCRAPBOOK has written such a letter now and then and must acknowledge that Moynihan's is a classic of the form: light-hearted as well as aggrieved, testifying to the general excellence of the company's products (this one regrettable lapse aside), and intimating that as a client of longstanding who buys in bulk, he should deserve some loyalty in return. We like to think a suitably abashed Brooks Brothers executive apologized and credited his account at least for the amount of the socks, if not more. Alas, as with almost all such collections of correspondence, the letter in reply is lost to history.

Coincidentally, we note that a survey of 2,000 Britons publicized in the *Daily Mail* of October 8 found that "over-50s" tend to "write an average of 2.9 letters of complaint per year, rising to 3.5 for the over-60s, compared to just 1.8 by those in their 20s." Our guess is that the numbers are lower, if similarly distributed by age, in the United States.

The letter of complaint, in short, may be a dying form. Instead we have the rise of the retailers' preemptive strike: the extremely annoying "customer feedback" forms that the cash-register clerks foist on us with increasing frequency, not to mention automated email requests following our online purchases insisting that we take a couple of minutes out of our busy day to fill out a

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survey describing our "customer experience," because "your satisfaction is our highest priority." The Scrapbook would like to know who we can complain to about this trend. ♦

Great Moments in Academese

An abstract from the *European Journal of Social Psychology*:

> Studies on dehumanization demonstrated that denying certain human characteristics might serve as a strategy for moral disengagement. Meat consumption—especially in the times of cruel animal farming—is related to the exclusion of animals from the human scope of justice. In the present research, it was hypothesized that the conception of human uniqueness (denying animals certain psychological characteristics) might be a strategy of meat-eaters' moral disengagement. Three studies compared the extent to which vegetarians and omnivores attribute psychological characteristics to humans versus animals. In Study 1, vegetarian participants ascribed more secondary (uniquely human) emotions to animals than did the omnivores; however, there were no differences in primary (animalistic) emotions. Study 2 showed that omnivores distinguish human characteristics from animalistic ones more sharply than vegetarians do, while both groups do not differ in distinguishing human characteristics from mechanistic ones. Study 3 confirmed the results by showing that omnivores ascribed less secondary emotions to traditionally edible animals than to the non-edible species, while vegetarians did not differentiate these animals. These results support the claim that the lay conceptions of "human uniqueness" are strategies of moral disengagement.

The Scrapbook's translation: Some European sociologists prove that a belief in human uniqueness—and by extension, we suppose, any affirmation that might be found in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam that man is not an animal—is really part of a "strategy of moral disengagement" aimed at absolving oneself of the crime of eating meat. Vegetarians feel that animals are quite human, whereas the morally inferior omnivores draw a false distinction between humans and nonhumans—for the sole reason (it turns out) that they are greedy pigs. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Kishore Mahbubani, the dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, is over for tea and I am telling him about what I consider to be the most exciting, moon-shot-quality, high-aspiration initiative proposed by President Obama . . . " (Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times*, October 13). ♦

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Loose Language

The plural of *syllabus* is *syllabi*. Or is it *syllabuses*? *Focuses* and *foci*, *cactuses* and *cacti*, *funguses* and *fungi*: English has a good set of these Greek and Latin words—and pseudo-Greek and Latin words—that might take a classical-sounding plural. Or might not. It kind of depends.

There's pretension, no doubt, in using fancy plurals: a hangover from the days when class distinction could be measured by the remnants of a classical education. But we've all been carefully trained to mock such pretensions (on the grounds, as near as I can tell, that it's terribly lower class to affect the traits of the upper class). And the most prominent use of such plurals nowadays is for comic effect, puncturing a stuffy occasion.

My favorite appears in one of Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* mysteries, where the detective announces, at a high-toned art gallery opening, that he collects *Elvii*: pictures of Elvis Presley painted on black velvet. But if we let the comic use entirely devour the serious, what shall we do with *nucleus* and *nuclei*, *stimulus* and *stimuli*—to say nothing of all the other classically influenced plurals that make an appearance in the mess that we call English: *parenthesis* to *parentheses*, or *phenomenon* to *phenomena*, or *medium* to *media*?

In truth, we object to these only when we notice them. Nobody gets worked up when *vertebra* increases to *vertebrae*, or *alumnus* swells to *alumni*. If a rule had to be constructed, it would probably involve where the stress falls and, especially, how technical the word's use is. Philosophers don't sound pretentious—at least, no more than usual—when they speak of one *genus* and two *genera*, any more than astronomers do with *nebula* and *nebulae*.

Mockery is not the only pressure on these words, of course. If the plural is better known, it begins to reach back, like a bacterium, to absorb the singular, as *data* is doing to *datum*, and *criteria* to *criterion*. If the singular and plural appear in different-enough contexts, they can lose sight of each other altogether. Who still hears *stigmata* as the plural of *stigma*?

The only real pressure in the other direction these days seems to be the copy editor's hunger for a settled answer, as though to say: *I don't particularly care whether you* pleaded *or* pled*; I just want you lawyers to pick one phrasing and stick with it so I can make my pages consistent.* "Descriptivism" and "prescriptivism" are the grammarians' only apparent choices: Do we make a dictionary of what people do say, or what they should say?

MATT COLLINS

It's common, in this context, to deride the pedants who constrict language with sterile rules of grammar. The problem, of course, is that there aren't very many of those pedants left. The recent campaign against the word *syllabi* appears to have begun on the "Language Log" blog, a fairly representative hangout for grammarians and linguistics types, where some of the descriptivists still seem to see themselves as embattled radicals struggling against Victorian hypocrisy. I'd more readily believe it if America had enough unrepentant prescriptivists left to fill a Volkswagen. Reading the Edwardian-style attacks on schoolmarm grammar, one expects to come across brave calls for free love, women's suffrage, and sentimental socialism.

In fact, the copy editors may have it right. What we need is a new prescriptivism, just to balance the books a little. The impulse to lock words down, to make them more consistent, and to use them clearly—isn't that part of language, too?

The trouble with pure descriptivism is that, in its moral outrage, it refuses to describe half the history of English. Words and usages come flooding in, and then those words and usages get sorted out. We're deep in one of the inflows, right now, and complaining about restrictions on English is like shouting fire while going over Niagara Falls.

As it happens, *syllabus* may have originated in Latin through a scribe's error in rendering a Greek word. At least the *Oxford English Dictionary* says so, but, as one "Language Log" commenter pointed out, the standard Liddell-Scott-Jones dictionary of Ancient Greek differs on the point. Regardless, the word passed into English from Latin, as a late borrowing, and it seems to have added its *–i* plural at the same time.

But if that's wrong, then so be it. Personally, I'm with the copy editors on this. Give me a prescriptivism—a descriptive prescriptivism, if need be, but a prescriptivism nonetheless. If college professors want *syllabi*, I'm all for it. If they want *syllabuses*, instead, they should go ahead. But can't they make up their minds? It's their word. All they have to do is decide what it's to be, and then tell the rest of us.

Joseph Bottum

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Be Like Bill

Once upon a time there was a Democratic president who, despite his faults, championed the power of markets, technology, and the global economy. He spoke about building "a bridge to the 21st century." He ratified major trade agreements like NAFTA and the WTO. He supported balanced budgets and signed into law a tough welfare reform. He cut the capital gains tax. He boasted that government spending as a share of the economy fell on his watch. He went so far as to call himself (privately) an Eisenhower Republican.

It wasn't an accident that Bill Clinton's policies contributed to a half-decade of prosperity. It wasn't a coincidence that Clinton, mostly as a result of this prosperity, was and remains popular. It isn't any wonder that today, almost a decade after he left office, Democrats are clamoring for the ex-president to join them on the stump.

No, what's surprising is that the Democrats are embracing Clinton while rejecting Clintonism. They've forgotten the lesson Clinton learned in 1994. And they're about to pay for it on November 2.

When Democrats liked globalization

DIRCK HALSTEAD / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Indeed, Clinton was still in residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue when the Democrats began rejecting his legacy. The Democrats turned left in 2000, when Al Gore pitted "the people" against "the powerful," and rogue lefties voted for Ralph Nader. During the Bush presidency, the Nader voters came home, the Netroots stoked liberal fury, and the Democrats abandoned free trade. The party's economic message became more about redistributing wealth in pursuit of income equality, and less about opening new markets and spurring innovation.

By the time of the financial crisis, the Democrats had convinced themselves that it was 1933. The moment was ripe, the Democrats believed, for the federal government to reassert its authority and push society in a purportedly egalitarian direction, through large-scale intervention in the economy.

The foreign marketplace, which once brimmed with promise for the Clintonites, is now a threat. Construction on the bridge to the 21st century has been indefinitely postponed because someone might make money off it and it might create nonunion jobs. Listen to the current president, and all you hear is antibusiness, trade-skeptical rhetoric. He says the Republicans want to help companies that are "shipping jobs overseas." Free trade "can grow our economy," but "our trade deals weren't enforced very well," so agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea must be left on the backburner.

For a man who says he's a "citizen of the world," Barack Obama seems singularly haunted by the specter of the foreign. Political advertising by interest groups—"could be the oil industry"; "could be the insurance industry"; "could even be foreign-owned corporations"—is somehow a "threat to our democracy." A Democratic National Committee attack ad uses the phrase "foreign money" twice. Needless to say, none of these charges is supported by evidence. It's almost enough to make you long for the days of Johnny Huang and the Buddhist Temple, back when Democrats loved international commerce and had no problem taking contributions from foreigners.

The larger context for the "foreign money" canard is the Democrats' reformed attitude toward globalization. For the Clinton Democrats, global markets brought America riches, ideas, and crosscultural exchange. For the Obama Democrats, global markets bring unemployment, inequality, and American decline. Hence Congress included a "Buy American" provision in the stimulus bill and denied permits to Mexican truckers. Last month the House authorized punitive tariffs if the Chinese don't appreciate the yuan.

The administration and the Federal Reserve, meanwhile, flirt with trade and currency wars as they depreciate the dollar in hopes of increasing American exports. Once upon a time the global economy was a thriving place with a bright future. As today's Democrats have it, it's a dog-eat-dog world. And Americans are victims of forces beyond their control.

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What would the economic and political situation be today, we wonder, if the Democrats had stuck to the Eisenhower Republicanism of the only Democratic president to win reelection since FDR? For the lesson the voters taught Clinton is that this really is a center-right country. Conservatives outnumber liberals. The independents who swing elections are a fickle lot who don't seem to like grand schemes. There's only so much a center-left president can do in this sort of environment without provoking a reaction. Better to embrace the market—not seek to transform the country—and promote American free enterprise and trade.

Of course, Clinton only learned this lesson after losing Congress in 1994. Maybe history is about to repeat itself. Maybe the presence of Clinton on the campaign trail will shock President Obama and the Democrats into recalling the Third Way. Maybe the president is going to stop talking about government-directed "green jobs" and start talking about privately funded start-ups like Google and Facebook instead.

Or maybe not. In which case, the opportunities for conservatives and Republicans—like the opportunities in the global marketplace—will be endless.

—Matthew Continetti

Why Liu Matters

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo on October 8 is a huge problem for China's leaders. It undermines their efforts to portray the Chinese Communist party as the legitimate representative of China's people. And for that very reason, Liu's prize is an enormous boon to the people of China—and to the cause of democracy in general.

In December 2009, the 54-year-old Liu was convicted of subversion and sentenced to 11 years in jail. Although the verdict cited many of his writings, the reason authorities moved against him when they did was his association with Charter 08. Published in late 2008, this document is a citizen's manifesto that calls for a constitutional democracy in China based on the rule of law. Its authors were inspired by the efforts of the Czechoslovak activists and intellectuals who, under Communism, launched Charter 77. That document contributed to the downfall of Communism in Czechoslovakia and in the broader Soviet Empire. Vaclav Havel, a founder of Charter 77 who went on to become president of the democratic Czech Republic, has returned the compliment by becoming a staunch advocate for Liu and his fellow Chinese "Chartists."

Liu has written that he believes China will become democratic. This is what Chinese Communist leaders fear. This is why Liu Xiaobo sits in jail. Although he is not the leading force behind Charter 08, Liu was among its most prominent signatories. Arresting him was a signal to others that the Communist authorities, while allowing greater latitude in many areas of life, cannot abide any challenge to the party's monopoly on power.

Liu's prize complicates the party's designs. It is a global recognition that there is an alternative to Communist rule. This matters not only to China's people, but also to the rest of the world—including the United States, which has come to accept, and sometimes even embrace, China's brand of authoritarianism. For some time, the guiding idea behind America's approach to Communist China has been that its economic development, spurred by trade and investment, "inevitably" would lead to liberalization and democracy.

This hasn't happened, of course. But the idea has nonetheless excused successive American administrations from including democratic advocacy in their dealings with Beijing. In the meantime, the Chinese Communist party has refined its methods of control, benefitted from its wealth and Western technologies, and become more sophisticated—and emboldened—in its dealings with foreign powers.

Glimpses of the party's true nature still show through, however. China's leaders are on a clumsy streak lately, most recently in their response to Japan's arrest of a Chinese ship captain after a collision in disputed waters. Similarly, Beijing's official reaction to Liu's Nobel Prize was to denounce it as an "obscenity," and tar the principled, humane recipient as a "criminal."

It's self-evident that a democratic China would be infinitely preferable to the status quo, for China's people and for the world. Democracy is not inevitable. But Charter 08 shows that democracy is possible—so long as patriots like Liu Xiaobo are free to work for the cause of human liberty, and so long as they find support from free people and democratic governments around the world.

—Ellen Bork

Man Up!

Sometimes it takes a woman to say, "Be a man."

On October 14, in the only debate in the Nevada Senate race between Senate majority leader Harry Reid and his Republican challenger, Sharron Angle, Reid

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was attacking his opponent for supporting private retirement accounts alongside Social Security. An exasperated Angle responded: "Man up, Harry Reid. You need to understand that we have a problem with Social Security."

The comment wasn't about Harry Reid's manliness. It wasn't really about Harry Reid personally—though it did have a certain piquancy, addressed as it was to the person who, fecklessly and irresponsibly embracing defeatism in a war our men were fighting, asserted in April 2007 that the surge in Iraq was "not accomplishing anything" and that "this war is lost."

Be a man, Harry

Angle's comment, rather, was addressed to Reid as Senate Democratic leader and majority leader. As a leader of his party, and the leader of the Senate, Reid has come to embody a proclivity among our elected officials to flee from confronting, in a grown-up manner—if one can put it that way—the real problems and challenges the nation faces.

Republicans haven't been immune to this proclivity either, as the Tea Party-backed GOP candidate Angle would be one of the first to acknowledge. And Angle would surely say that one consequence of the coming election should be not just to oust a lot of Democrats who richly deserve to be ousted, but to encourage, to induce, to insist that the elected officials who replace them "man up."

What prompted Angle to this exhortation? Maybe she's a fan of Ben Zimmer's "On Language" column in the *New York Times* magazine, and remembered that, a few weeks ago, Zimmer considered the meaning of "man up." He pointed out that "the exhortation is taking on many guises in American popular culture right now. . . . Its spectrum of meanings runs from 'Don't be a sissy; toughen up' all the way to 'Do the right thing; be a *mensch*,' to use the Yiddishism for an honorable or upright person."

Both meanings—toughen up; do the right thing—are presumably what Angle wanted to convey in the debate. And they are the instructions that the American people want to convey to their elected officials this November. Harry Reid, who's likely to lose his seat, probably won't have the opportunity to act in accordance with his opponent's injunction. But the GOP will have the chance, and the responsibility, to man up. And luckily, there will be a lot of conservative women around to make sure Republicans act like real men.

—William Kristol

NATE BEELER / WASHINGTON EXAMINER

The Regulatory Hurricane

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Today, a regulatory hurricane threatens our economy and its ability to create the 20 million new jobs that we need by the end of this decade. It's been building up strength for some time. Over the last several decades, more than 100,000 regulations have been issued, many of which impose heavy burdens on our job creators.

In the last two years, we've seen a dramatic acceleration of major regulations and mandates, from the health care and financial reform laws to some of the most activist agendas ever undertaken by federal agencies. Businesses are hunkering down in response, hoping to wait out the storm until the economy becomes more certain. Without certainty, businesses find it difficult to make the plans and investments needed to grow and create jobs.

The business community has long recognized the need for sensible regulations to ensure workplace safety, guarantee worker rights, and protect public health. But we've gone too far. America is sinking under the weight of the ever-expanding regulatory state.

If you want to see how far reaching the regulatory state has become, look at *The Code of Federal Regulations*. Put simply, it includes every regulation in force in this country. The document is nearly 150,000 pages long, spread over 50 different volumes.

While many regulations have a positive impact, many others are outdated, ineffective, overly complicated, and counterproductive. The Small Business Administration puts the total price tag of complying with federal regulations at $1.75 trillion in 2008. That amounts to $15,500 for each U.S. household.

It's only going to get worse. The EPA is advancing 29 proposed major rules and 173 others—an unprecedented level of regulatory action. The massive health care law creates 183 new agencies, commissions, panels, and other bodies. And the financial regulatory reform bill creates nearly 500 regulatory rulemakings, 60 studies, and 93 reports.

So what's to be done to stem this rising tide?

First, Congress needs to stop approving bills that pass the buck to the regulators.

Second, Congress must exercise vigorous oversight of the sweeping bills that it passes.

Third, the federal agencies must do a much better job of complying with laws designed to ensure the use of quality data, cost-benefit analyses, and the scrupulous review of regulations.

Finally, the American people must speak out against the regulatory hurricane that is overwhelming our economy and squelching job creation.

At stake is the health of our economy, our standard of living, our global competitiveness, and the free enterprise system that is at the heart of the American Dream.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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Can't Take Their Eyes off Her

The Christine O'Donnell phenomenon.

BY FRED BARNES

Christine O'Donnell is swarmed by the media following a debate on October 14.

AP / ROB CARR

Wilmington, Delaware

When Christine O'Donnell and Chris Coons emerged from an ornate Hotel du Pont ballroom, the world media were ready for them. They'd debated for 45 minutes with few harsh words passing between them, and now reporters (and TV cameras) from the Irish, French, British, Asian, and American press were eager to pump them with questions.

But O'Donnell, the young (41), pretty, and very conservative Republican candidate for Delaware's open Senate seat went one direction and Chris Coons, her Democratic opponent, the other. The media swarm had to decide quickly whom to pursue. It was nearly unanimous. The horde rushed en masse after O'Donnell. Only a few followed Coons.

"I looked over my shoulder and there was my opponent taking my leftovers," O'Donnell told a TV reporter later.

O'Donnell *is* the campaign here. She is colorful and outspoken and willing to attack her own party for giving her only minimal support after she upset Representative Mike Castle in the Republican primary in September—all traits the press loves in a candidate. Castle, 70, has none of them. Nor does Coons, who's about as exciting as dry toast. Absent O'Donnell, the media wouldn't be here.

Castle was the favorite of party leaders in both Delaware and Washington. They figured he'd defeat Coons on November 2 and she'd lose. And they may have been right. Now they're stuck with O'Donnell, whether they like her or not. It's an awkward situation, and they're making it worse. Castle hasn't endorsed her, and the state party has only grudgingly come to her aid.

In Washington, the folks at the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) had a perfectly sensible argument for not airing TV ads boosting her when she was roughly 20 percentage points behind Coons in polls: She was a lost cause. But the day after she debated Coons on CNN last week, a Rasmussen poll found she'd cut Coons's lead to 51-40 percent. So O'Donnell may not be doomed to lose after all and might benefit from television spots by the NRSC.

But there's a twist. One of her advisers believes she might benefit even more by running against the NRSC and the Washington political class. She's already honed the anti-Washington theme. "If you want a U.S. senator who will stand up to the Washington elite … then I humbly ask you to vote O'Donnell for U.S. Senate," she said in her opening statement in the CNN debate.

O'Donnell, it turns out, is an excellent campaigner, knowledgeable on issues and confident in making the case for conservative policies. She and Coons, 47 and balding, debated before the stuffy Wilmington Rotary Club the morning after the nationally televised

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CNN debate. In both sessions, she was the more assertive.

Coons, the county executive of New Castle County, is a cautious technocrat who acts as if he expects to win so long as he doesn't make an egregious mistake. He rarely mentions President Obama, whose popularity has dipped in Delaware, and was probably wary of Obama's campaign appearance for him in the state last week.

In the debates, Coons fashioned a tame anti-Washington message of his own. "Washington is broken," he said. Not only that, but there's "partisan gridlock" and "elected officials … are putting narrow partisan agendas ahead of the good of the country." Who knew? He also declared that Washington "isn't working well enough for us." No kidding.

Coons calls himself a "Truman Democrat," but he doesn't sound like one. He's no hardliner. On Afghanistan, he doesn't sound like an Obama Democrat either. It's a "decade-long war with no end in sight," he says, and he's opposed to "rebuilding all Afghanistan." Instead of deploying a large number of troops there, he favors what he calls "duck hunting" by "a small, agile force with lots of intelligence" that would track down terrorists.

O'Donnell supports the war, but is critical of Obama's deadline of July 2011 to begin pulling American troops out of Afghanistan. She calls it a "random time withdrawal." She would put off withdrawal until Afghanistan has "a representative government … that serves the needs of the people and that can defend themselves."

To the extent that credentials matter, Coons (Amherst B.A., law and divinity degrees from Yale) has the advantage. O'Donnell got her B.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson University last summer. She's ducked questions relating to incorrect statements in a lawsuit she filed against a former employer. And she's had a string of financial difficulties. "When I fell upon difficult times, I made the sacrifices needed to set things right," she explained in the CNN debate. "I sold my house. And I sold a lot of my possessions in order to pay off my personal debt. … I have worked hard to get in the position that I am. … And I'm stronger for it."

O'Donnell has been something of a perennial candidate. She ran for the Senate in 2006, then in 2008 against Joe Biden. Now she's running for the seat Biden held for 36 years before becoming vice president.

The CNN debate was the "tipping point," O'Donnell told me. This was before the new poll showed her gaining on Coons. "We shattered my opponent's glass jaw," she says. "You're going to hear the glass falling on the floor."

She won't be lacking for money. Since the primary, she's raised $4 million, enough to pay for "tougher" TV ads attacking Coons. "I believe he's gotten a free ride so far." Indeed he has. As a college senior, he wrote about being "a bearded Marxist." It was a joke, he says, and the press has accepted his explanation at face value.

O'Donnell's life has been scrutinized far more aggressively. It was discovered she had dabbled in witchcraft as a teenager, and reporters took this revelation seriously. So did O'Donnell in her first ad. "I'm not a witch," she said. "I'm you." The ad was controversial, but it more or less put the issue to rest.

Now we're about to see "a whole new Christine O'Donnell," she says. New or not, we'll see a lot of her. She's a political star, a celebrity, and the press can't take its eyes off her. ♦

A Little Less Blue?

Massachusetts Republicans hope Scott Brown's victory was a leading indicator. BY MICHAEL WARREN

Westford, Massachusetts

Last January, the voters of Massachusetts chose Republican Scott Brown to serve in the Senate, no small feat in that famously Democratic state. Can Massachusetts Republicans build on their rare victory this fall?

First things first: Republicans in Massachusetts are still fighting behind enemy lines. The state's governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of the commonwealth, attorney general, and state auditor are all Democrats. Democrats have 35 seats in the state senate to the Republicans' 5 and 144 seats in the state house to the Republicans' 16.

In federal elections, Brown is the only Republican to win recently in Massachusetts. Democrats hold the other Senate seat and all ten House seats. Since 1928, Massachusetts has voted for a Republican presidential ticket four times: twice for Eisenhower-Nixon and twice for Reagan-Bush. It was the only state George McGovern won in 1972. In 2008, the state gave Barack Obama 62 percent of the vote and John McCain a paltry 36 percent.

Finally, in 2008, 37 percent of voters in Massachusetts were registered Democrats, while only 11.6 percent were registered Republicans. But that was all before Scott Brown, who won 6 of the state's 10 congressional districts. That presented an opportunity for 6 Republican challengers in these midterm elections, 4 of whom are running competitively.

The Tenth Congressional District, which stretches from Quincy south of Boston down the bay coast through Plymouth County and Cape Cod, holds the best chance for the GOP to gain a seat. Obama won the Tenth with 55 percent, his worst performance in Massachusetts. Longtime representative Bill Delahunt

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ran virtually unopposed in 2008 and won in 2006 with 64 percent, but the Democratic congressman is not running for reelection. This was Brown's best district, where he won 60 percent of the vote.

"We really feel like we're in a position to win," says Republican Jeff Perry, the state legislator from Sandwich running against Democratic district attorney Bill Keating. The coastal and suburban district has a more conservative profile than most in Massachusetts, with an older median age and a higher percentage of military veterans than the rest of the state. The *Cook Political Report* deems this race "Lean Democratic," the best rating for Republicans in Massachusetts.

North of Boston in Essex and Middlesex counties is the Sixth District, typically a Democratic stronghold. Congressman John Tierney of Salem has won 70 percent of the vote in his last three elections, and Obama carried the district with 57 percent. Brown also won 57 percent of the vote, so Republicans could have a chance. Their challenger is Bill Hudak, a lawyer from Saugus who would normally be too conservative and too anti-Obama to win; Hudak gained notoriety in 2008 for having a sign in his yard depicting Obama as Osama bin Laden, a decision he says now he "absolutely" regrets.

In addition to Brown's victory, what's made this race competitive is a scandal involving Tierney, whose wife Patrice was indicted this month on charges she aided and abetted her fugitive gambler brother's false tax filings. The scandal has given Hudak a powerful talking point about Washington corruption, and it may depress enough would-be Tierney voters to make the race close.

Candidate Bill Hudak greets Tea Party protesters in Washington, December 15, 2009.

Just west in the Fifth District is Jon Golnik, a small businessman from Carlisle and a Republican running against Democrat Niki Tsongas. Tsongas, the widow of Democratic legend Paul Tsongas, ran unopposed in 2008 while Obama got 59 percent of the district and won by 20 points. But Tsongas won by only 6 points in her 2007 special election, meaning the Fifth, which includes parts of Essex, Middlesex, and Worcester counties and the city of Lowell, is not too far out of Republicans' reach. Brown's nearly 30,000 vote margin of victory (he won 56 percent of the vote) is a big boost for Golnik.

Golnik is perhaps the best candidate the GOP could hope for. Personable and engaging, he is visible in the district, a necessity for anyone challenging such a well-known name as Tsongas. Golnik is also perceptive of the electoral dynamics. "If this were a normal election cycle, I would say running in an open seat is a fantastic opportunity," Golnik says. But "in this cycle, running against an incumbent is even better." Of all the congressional races in Massachusetts, the Fifth most resembles the Brown-Coakley Senate match-up. Golnik has blue-collar appeal and the benefit of underdog status, and his campaign could sneak up on Tsongas in the final two weeks.

Finally, the gerrymandered Fourth District, which includes the liberal Boston suburb Brookline and stretches south to Fall River and New Bedford, holds the top prize for Republicans: 15-term Democratic congressman Barney Frank. The Fourth voted for Obama by a 28-point margin in 2008, and it has a Cook Partisan Voting Index of D +14, exceeded only by Boston's urban districts. The scourge of conservatives, Frank has run unopposed in every midterm election since 1994, but Republican candidate Sean Bielat from Brookline has broken the pattern this year.

Brown carried the Fourth by his slimmest margin of victory, fewer than 2,000 votes. But a win is a win, and Brown's success means Republicans here are fired up even in this unlikeliest of races. Bielat is an attractive candidate, a young Marine reservist who speaks calmly and articulately in contrast with Frank's bluster. Even as Frank's ties to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have become well known, he remains popular within the district. A Bielat victory would be the out-of-left-field upset of the year.

The effect of Scott Brown's win in Massachusetts may be largely psychological. The perennial problem of Republicans' unpopularity in New England seems less daunting now, which is good news for candidates and potential donors alike. More important, it has provided the state's conservatives hope after years in the wilderness. For Massachusetts voters, there is now a choice. ♦

NEWSCOM

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A Bum Steer

Obama's advice to college students.

BY ANDREW B. WILSON

President Obama continues to sell his omnibus anti-work, anti-jobs, and antigrowth program at colleges and universities across the country. This is a setting where "most folks" (to use a favorite presidential expression) cling to their own version of guns and religion—consisting of left-wing political causes and a devout sense of being the bearers of a new Enlightenment. With little knowledge and experience of the world outside the campus gates, they cheer the vilification of business and commerce.

At the outset of every speech, Obama laments the sorry state of the economy. He blames it on the "great mess" or the "deep hole" that he inherited upon coming to office. In his telling, government had no hand in creating this mess—other than the sins of omission of previous administrations which encouraged the recklessness and rapacity of private enterprise. Talking of the future as if it were a game of blackjack, the president says he is prepared to "double down" on education and an oil-free future.

He makes promises: easy money in the form of more low-interest college loans for young people; early forgiveness of those loans for those who forswear the private sector and go into public sector jobs; the ability of campus hangers-on to stay on their parents' health care plans until the age of 26; and the realization of his vision of a "clean energy future," which is supposed to create "hundreds of thousands of new American jobs by 2012" and enable Team USA to surge ahead of India, China, and other rapidly growing nations in international competitiveness.

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Stripped to the essentials, all this is to say: Hey, why be in any hurry to get a job in this economy? You've probably got it pretty good where you are. But if you have to work, you'll find the best jobs in the public sector and in other parts of the economy (energy, health care, the environment) that we have brought under government control. That's where the action is.

From time immemorial, older generations have warned children nearing adulthood that they must get ready to fend for themselves. Obama throws that advice out the window. He tells college students they needn't worry about being pushed out of the parental nest.

"How many people are under the age of 26 in this crowd," he asked a rally in Madison in late September, confident of the applause that would greet his next words: "Every single one of you, when you get out of college, if you have not found a job that offers you health care, you're gonna be able to stay on your parents' health care until you're 26 years old, so you don't end up taking the risk and getting sick and being bankrupt."

In a celebrated remark earlier this year, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi took this thought a step further. She said of Obamacare: "We see it as an entrepreneurial bill, a bill that says to someone, 'If you want to be creative, and be a musician or whatever, you can leave your work, focus on your skill, your passion, your aspirations, because you will have health care.'"

The underlying idea seems to be, why should people have to work if they have better things to do with their time? The notion that having to step up to adult responsibilities is a productive incentive seems alien to the progressive mind. And when it comes to college loans, Obama would skew the incentives toward jobs that are already imperiled.

"Starting in 2014," he explained, "we're going to be in a situation where young people can cap their debt [for college loans] at 10 percent of their salary, regardless of what that salary is. And if you go into something like teaching, for example, or if you're a police officer or firefighter, public service jobs of one sort or another, then that's forgiven after ten years."

One has to wonder whether the president has been reading the newspapers. In my home town of St. Louis, the big news this morning is that city officials are prepared to cut as many as 60 firefighting positions, about 10 percent of the workforce. Jeff Rainford, a top city official, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: "If costs continue to rise as they have in the past, we won't have a fire department, we'll just have a fire pension. At some point, someone has to stand up for the taxpayers."

The problem in St. Louis, as in other communities across the nation, is that the bill has come due for overly generous public sector compensation and pension plans that allow people to retire at close to full salary after working for only 25 to 30 years. In St. Louis, pension costs for city workers have soared from $7 million in 2000 to $61 million this year. The city now pays more for pensions and health care than it does for a host of services including trash collection, street repair, and snow removal.

Obama must know that roughly a third of the $814 billion stimulus package has gone to helping state and municipal governments patch budgetary holes. The St. Louis Fire Department is now hoping for a $5 million federal grant to stave off some of the cuts made necessary by fast-rising pension obligations, which account for nearly one-third of the department's budget, up from one-eighth in 2001.

The president would seem to be steering students into occupations that have already benefited from too much taxpayer support—enough to bring many communities and even

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whole states to the verge of bankruptcy. At the same time, and for the same reason, these very occupations have little to offer in terms of opportunity for future employment.

Of course, public sector unions represent a large and important part of Obama's political base. It would be silly to expect him to criticize unions. But he might at least acknowledge that the free market is the greatest wealth- and job-creating machine known to man.

In a free society and an open economy, countless individuals seek to meet their own needs by meeting the needs of others. That is how wealth is created. And that is why most people both *have to work* and find working worthwhile. ♦

Kurds in the Middle

Caught between Iran and Turkey, with nowhere to hide. BY JONATHAN SPYER

Iraqi Kurdistan

"There is today a strategic alliance between Iran and Turkey's [ruling AKP party]," says Murat Karayilan, the de facto leader of the PKK. The Kurdistan Workers' party's actual number one, Abdullah Ocalan, has been imprisoned in Turkey since 1999 for his war against Ankara dating back to 1984, a conflict that has cost around 40,000 lives. Here in the heart of the Qandil mountains of northern Iraq where I've come to meet Karayilan, this war shows no sign of ending.

The PKK, said George W. Bush in 2007, "is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq, and they're an enemy of the United States." The previous administration had hoped to secure Washington's alliance with Ankara by supplying "actionable intelligence" that the Turks used in cross-border raids against the PKK. Nonetheless, the AKP moved closer to the Islamic Republic of Iran, an alliance cemented by mutual interest—the strategic threat that Kurdish rebels pose to both Muslim states.

The PKK then are in search of new alliances of their own, which is why they arranged for an Israeli journalist to meet the leadership of an outfit that was once closely aligned with Israel's Syrian enemy. Of course, Jerusalem once counted Turkey as a key strategic ally.

"Erdogan is a double-dealer," Karayilan told me. "He shows sympathy for the children of Palestine, but under his command Kurdish children are killed and imprisoned."

The Turkish prime minister, according to Karayilan, is no less hypocritical in his dealings with regional and international actors, sidling up to both Washington and Tehran. "Turkey has relations with the USA, and also with Iran," said Karayilan, "and both are used against the Kurds. In Qandil, U.S.-made drones fly over the zone. They collect intelligence and bring it back to Turkey. Turkey then comes and bombs the area. But Turkey also passes the information on to Iran, which also bombards us."

Karayilan called on the United States, Israel, and the EU to change their policy toward Turkey. He contended that Ankara is seeking to lay the diplomatic groundwork for a major operation to crush the PKK in Qandil. "They are trying to get international support—and regional support from Iran and Syria—to mount a big military operation, in the 'Sri Lankan' style."

The PKK has just extended for the second time a monthlong ceasefire. The movement is clearly trying to walk a narrow line between avoiding the major Turkish operation into Qandil they fear, and allowing the Kurdish issue to drift even further from international attention.

Around 6,500 people have fled their homes in the mountains since May. Even as the international media and Western governments have been nearly silent, the Turkish air force and Iranian artillery are engaged in the regular bombing of civilian areas. The Kurds—Turkish and Iranian—find themselves in the way of what Karayilan called the common Iranian/AKP project to use the "ideology of Islam to control and dominate the Islamic world."

So far, the PKK has had little success finding new allies in the rapidly shifting strategic topography of the Middle East. Neither Washington nor Europe is inclined right now to remove the group from its list of terrorist organizations. Moreover, the PKK's old-fashioned, leftist ideology makes it an odd man out in the clash that defines today's Middle East, where pro-Western forces are squared off against Iranian-backed, usually Islamist, assets. The Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil tolerates the presence of the PKK in the mountains, out of a core Kurdish solidarity. But there is little natural common ground between the KRG and the guerrillas in Qandil. Still, there are rumors that the PKK's Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) ally has enjoyed behind the scenes Western and Israeli support for its fight against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. But even if there's anything to the stories, it's hard to imagine Turkey drifting so far from the U.S. orbit that the PKK would enjoy similar Western and Israeli backing.

The alliance between the AKP and Tehran is only strengthening. The *Daily Telegraph* recently reported that Iran is in the process of donating

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$25 million to the AKP's coffers. The money is intended to help produce an AKP victory in crucial general elections next year.

The volume of trade between Turkey and Iran has increased from $1.2 billion in 2002, when the AKP took power, to $10 billion in 2010, a figure Turkey aims to triple over the next five years. Ankara opposed the latest round of sanctions against Iran at the U.N. Security Council, and appears poised to play an active role in subverting additional EU and U.S. measures.

Whether or not Turkey and Iran's budding relationship represents a new strategic alliance with ambitions stretching beyond the scope of rocky, blighted Qandil, its most vivid expression currently is the coordinated threat of Iranian cannons and Turkish bombers, laying waste to a bleak mountain region of northern Iraq. Here the Kurds are looking down from their strong places in the mountains at two powerful regimes with a common desire to see them subjugated. ♦

Nuclear Socialism

Energy subsidies—of any kind—are bad business.

BY AMORY B. LOVINS

Given Americans' increasing anxiety over made-in-Washington socialism, it's a wonder that the nuclear power industry has escaped scrutiny for so long. The federal government socializes the risk of investing in nuclear power while privatizing profits. This same formula drove the frenzied speculation that cratered the housing and financial markets. What might it cause with nuclear power?

We got a taste three decades ago. Congress grew infatuated with the promises of nuclear promoters. It overrode the risk assessment of private capital markets, and expanded subsidies for nuclear projects to $0.08 per kilowatt-hour—often more than investors risked or than the power could be sold for. This seduced previously prudent utilities and regulators into a nuclear binge that *Forbes* in 1985 called "the largest managerial disaster in business history."

Amory B. Lovins is chairman and chief scientist of the independent, apolitical, nonprofit Rocky Mountain Institute (www.rmi.org). He uses Doug Koplow's subsidy analyses at www.earthtrack.net.

Threefold cost overruns amounted to hundreds of billions of dollars. Three-fifths of the ordered plants were abandoned. Many others proved uncompetitive. Steep debt downgrades hit four in five nuclear utilities. Some went broke. Through 1978, 253 U.S. reactors were ordered (none since). Only 104 survive. Two-fifths of those have failed for a year or more at least once.

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New nuclear plants, we're assured, are different—novel enough to merit technology-demonstration subsidies, yet proven enough that investors can rest easy. They're allegedly so much safer than deep-sea oil drilling that we needn't fret, yet so risky that one major nuclear operator insured itself eleven times more against nuclear accidents' consequences than its potential liability to the public. New reactors are supposedly so cheap they crush competitors, yet so costly they need subsidies of 100 percent or more.

That's right: $0.04-$0.06 of new 2005-07 subsidies, plus $0.01-$0.04 of remaining old subsidies, brings total federal support for new nuclear plants, built by private utility companies, to $0.05-$0.10 for a kilowatt-hour worth $0.06. Some people are outraged that the federal government is subsidizing the new Chevrolet Volt, retailing at $41,000, with a tax credit of $7,500. Imagine if the tax credit were $50,000! If new reactors can produce competitive power, they don't need subsidies; if not, they don't deserve subsidies.

Yet nuclear subsidies to some of the world's largest corporations have become shockingly large. A Maryland reactor's developer reckoned just its requested federal loan guarantee would transfer $14.8 billion of net present value, comparable to its construction cost, from American taxpayers to the project's 50/50 owners—Électricité de France (EDF), 84 percent owned by the French government, and a private utility 9.5 percent owned by EDF. The project's builder, AREVA, is 93 percent owned by the French state, yet has been promised a $2 billion U.S. loan guarantee for a fuel plant competing with an American one. EDF just booked a billion-euro loss provision, mainly over the Maryland plant's deteriorating prospects. AREVA's construction fiascoes in Finland and France have "seriously shaken" confidence, says EDF's ex-chairman, and four nations' safety regulators have criticized the design. Meanwhile, the chairman of Exelon, the top U.S. nuclear operator, says cheap natural gas will postpone new nuclear plants for a decade or two. Slack electricity demand and unpriced carbon emissions further weaken the nuclear case. Markets would therefore charge a risk premium. But U.S. nuclear power evades market discipline—or did until October 8, 2010, when the Maryland promoter shelved the project because, for its $7.5 billion federal loan guarantee, it would have to have paid an "unworkable" $0.88 billion fee, or 11.6 percent, to cover the default risk to taxpayers.

Another $8.3 billion of the $18.5 billion nuclear loan guarantees authorized in 2007 was provisionally issued in February to two Georgia reactors. Taxpayers will be on the hook for about $100 per American family. To offset that risk, the Department of Energy proposed to charge a default fee that's only a small fraction of the likely loss rate that the Congressional Budget

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Office and Government Accountability Office have estimated. In bankruptcy, taxpayers wouldn't even recover before private lenders—not that there are any private lenders. The Treasury's Federal Financing Bank, financed by new Treasury debt, would issue the DOE-guaranteed loan. Failure would cost taxpayers $8.2 billion net. The developer keeps any upside.

The Georgia project's loan-guarantee default fee is much lower than the Maryland plant's, partly because the Georgia developers have already shifted more of their remaining risks to ratepayers. Their project is 54 percent owned by municipal utilities and rural co-ops with access to cheaper financing than private utilities, including subsidized stimulus bonds. Some of these munis and co-ops signed 50-year contracts with the nuclear operators that would put them and their customers on the hook even for power not needed or wanted. In 1982-83, the analogously financed five-reactor WPPSS ("Whoops") project in the Northwest defaulted on municipal bonds, vaporizing $3-$4 billion in today's dollars.

Moreover, a few southeastern states now make utility customers finance new reactors in advance—often whatever they cost, whether they ever run, no questions asked, plus a return to the utilities for risks that they no longer bear. This scraps all five bedrock principles of utility regulation: payment only for service delivered and only for used and useful assets; accountability for cost and prudence; return matching risk; and no commission able to bind its successors. Such laws re-create for nuclear power the same moral hazard that just shredded America's financial sector.

With such juicy incentives, why won't private investors finance reactors? In 2005-08, with the strongest subsidies, capital markets, and nuclear politics in history, why couldn't 34 proposed reactors raise any private capital? Because there's no business case. As a recent study by Citibank U.K. is titled "New Nuclear—the Economics Say No." That's why central planners bought all 61 reactors now under construction worldwide. None were free-market transactions. Subsidies can't reverse bleak fundamentals. A defibrillated corpse will jump but won't revive.

American taxpayers already reimburse nuclear power developers for legal and regulatory delays. A unique law caps liability for accidents at a present value only one-third that of BP's $20 billion trust fund for oil-spill costs; any bigger damages fall on citizens. Yet the *competitive* risks facing new reactors are uninsured, high, and escalating.

The Sequoyah nuclear generating station, near Chattanooga

Since 2000, as nuclear power's cost projections have more than tripled, its share of global electricity generation has fallen from 17 percent to 13 percent. That of cogeneration (making electricity together with useful heat in factories or buildings) and renewables (excluding big hydropower projects) rose from 13 percent to 18 percent.

These bite-sized, modular, quickly built projects—with financial risks, costs, and subsidies generally below nuclear's and declining—now dominate global power investments. Last year, renewables (wind, water, solar, geothermal), excluding large hydroelectric dams, attracted $131 billion of private capital and added 52 billion watts. Global nuclear output fell for the past three years, capacity for two.

This market shift helps protect the climate. Renewables, cogeneration, and efficiency can displace 2 to 20 times more carbon per dollar, 20 to 40 times faster, than new nuclear power—saving trillions of dollars over decades and avoiding vast financial risks.

Still uncompetitive despite 60 years of handouts, nuclear developers clamor for ever greater subsidies. The White House, Senate, and House all propose expanded federal loan guarantees ($36 billion was the White House figure); developers demand at least $100 billion. The Clean Energy Deployment Administration endorsed by both houses of Congress could issue *unlimited* loan guarantees without congressional oversight. It would probably fund nuclear and renewable energy like the recipe for elephant-and-rabbit stew—one elephant, one rabbit.

Bureaucrats, not credit markets, would evaluate risks and pick winners. Taxpayers would become America's main energy financiers and almost exclusive nuclear risk-takers. America's once market-based electricity investments would work like China's, Russia's, and France's nuclear command economies. This is bipartisan folly.

As nuclear subsidies spiral toward fiscal ruin, brave voices protest from a handful of think tanks: the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the George C. Marshall Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the National Taxpayers Union, Taxpayers for Common Sense. Yet most congressional budget hawks—supposedly sages of circumspection and defenders of free markets—urge more nuclear socialism.

Here's a principled alternative: Reverse the energy subsidy arms-race. Don't add subsidies; subtract them. Take markets seriously. Not just for nuclear and fossil fuels but for all so-called "clean" technologies, head toward *zero* energy subsidies, free enterprise, risk-based credit pricing, competition on merit, cheaper energy services, greater energy security, and dwindling deficits.

Who wouldn't like that? Why don't we find out? ♦

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This new *Original Order Version* uses modern English, but retains the original grace, accuracy and grandeur of the King James Version, and eliminates archaic terms from the Middle Ages such as *thee, thou, ghost, hath* and *shalt.*

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Colliding with Reality

The problem with electric cars.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

The age of the electric car is here. Everyone says so. There it is emblazoned on the cover of the latest *Wired* magazine: "The age of the electric car is here. CHARGE!" In the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman laments that the Chinese are embracing the electric car while America (sigh) is again failing to keep pace with enlightened Chicom authoritarianism. Friedman calls electric cars their "moon shot" and frets that if we don't get with the program, we might be reduced to importing millions of electric vehicles (EVs) from China. And then there are the ads. Sit down for a little Sunday football and you're overwhelmed by commercials for the Nissan Leaf and the Chevy Volt, primping and preening, intent on winning over even the SUV-driving troglodytes who watch the NFL.

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So make no mistake: The electric car is happening. Right now.

Mind you, the electric car has been happening, in fits and starts, since before Henry Ford. Electric motors lost out to the internal combustion engine as the automobile was taking over America. They have raised intermittent challenges now and again. The last serious attempt at an electric car came from General Motors in 1990, when the company began work on a project that culminated in the EV1, a two-seater which could go 75 miles on a single charge. General Motors spent $1 billion on the car; 800 of them were eventually leased to customers. A couple years later they were all recalled and scrapped. This time, we are told, it will be different. It always is.

The latest EV boom originated with a Silicon Valley start-up called Tesla Motors. Under the direction of Internet entrepreneur Elon Musk, Tesla built a sexy, no-compromise electric sports car—it goes from 0 to 60 in 3.7 seconds with a range of 244 miles. Tesla's big innovation was replacing the heavy, lead-lined batteries previously used in EVs with the lighter, lithium-ion batteries commonly used in laptop computers. In 2008 the Tesla Roadster went into production and won rave reviews. At $109,000 a pop, it wasn't a mass-market machine, but the automotive world was entranced nonetheless.

General Motors chief Bob Lutz used Tesla's example as an argument to fast-track the recently released Chevy Volt, a four-seat sedan powered by an electric motor. General Motors markets the Volt as an EV that can go 40 miles on a single charge, but also has a "range extending" gas engine that kicks in to power the motor if you run out of juice. With the gas engine engaged, GM claims the Volt gets 50 mpg on the highway. Its sticker price is $41,000.

Nissan has just rolled out its own EV, a four-door hatchback called the Leaf. It lacks the Volt's gasoline backup but boasts a 100-mile range and a low price of $32,780—practically free by EV standards.

These cars are just the tip of the EV iceberg. Later this year another startup, Coda Automotive—working in partnership with the Chinese!—will begin selling a $44,900 sedan that seats five and gets 100 miles per charge. (It achieves this extended range in part because its top speed is only 80 mph.) Over the next two years Mitsubishi, Ford, Toyota, Honda, Fiat, Renault, and Smart all plan on bringing an EV to market.

And Tesla is preparing to reinvent the EV again in 2012 when it moves the Model S into production. The Model S is a four-door sedan with three rows of seats. It will have a range of 160 miles and an expected base price of $57,400. In 2009 the company bought a 5.5 million-square-foot plant in Fremont, California, that had once been jointly operated by GM and Toyota. Elon Musk mused to *Wired*, "We could have 250,000 cars coming out of here in five years." And that's just the start. He told the *New Yorker*, "We could be selling a million cars a year in ten years. That seems doable."

Soon, a network of stations for quick-charging electric cars will appear, letting you take your EV on long trips, just like a gas-guzzler. And we'll need them, because President Obama has set a national goal of 1 million EVs on the road by 2015.

If only it were all true.

Let's start with the Volt. *Popular Mechanics* has tested the Volt's mileage claims and found that it gets 33 miles on its electric charge (not 40) and that its miles-per-gallon performance is 31.67 mpg in the city and 36 mpg on the highway (not 50). Edward Niedermeyer, editor of the website The Truth About Cars, writes that it's "a vehicle that costs $41,000 but offers the performance and interior space of a $15,000 economy car." The Volt's 2011 production run was originally slated to be 60,000 units; it's been cut to 10,000.

By comparison, the Leaf is a world-beater, unless you look at the fine print. It might have a 100-mile range, but it takes 20 hours to charge on a standard 110V outlet. The good news is that you can charge the Leaf in just 8 hours if you have a 220V outlet—and even faster if you can find one of the "quick charge" stations that EV evangelists promise will mushroom across the country some day. There are currently 500 charging stations in the United States—400 of them are in Southern California.

Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Concerned persons suggest that unless there is an "***awakening***," government in America's small-government republic will continue being transformed into the large-government, progressive ideology. But what ***awakening*** is powerful enough to halt the progressive juggernaut of large-government control of what people can and cannot do?

Richard W. Wetherill
1906-1989

The writer would like you to consider that the above ***awakening*** to the existence of a natural law of right behavior ***has that power***. The law is known as nature's ***law of absolute right***.

For nearly two decades, this behavioral law has often been carefully explained in one-page advertisements in several national magazines and newspapers, and on radio broadcasts. There is also a Website where people worldwide can learn how to get out of trouble, stay out of trouble, and start a new life.

This natural law exerts the power of life and death for every person alive today as is evidenced by the untold trillions of those people who had previously populated this planet.

"How?" you ask. ***Creation's law of absolute right states: Right action gets right results; wrong action gets wrong results. The law defines right action as thoughts and behavior that are rational and honest and fill the need of each situation.***

Therefore, people's motivation consisting of man-made laws, judgments, beliefs, likes and dislikes, wants and don't wants does not conform to ***creation's law of absolute right***, and when wrong results occur, people do not look to themselves.

Laws of nature never play favorites. People obey natural laws or they suffer the consequences. ***That*** is the awakening information for this generation. And if some people choose to ignore ***nature's behavioral law***, eventually their wrong action will cause an eternal sleep from which there has been no awakening.

WHOEVER OR WHATEVER IS THE CREATOR revealed this behavioral law to the mind of Richard W. Wetherill in 1929 in answer to his fervent appeal for an understanding of humanity's plight. And although Wetherill took no credit for identifying this law, his efforts to inform people of the flaw in their approach to life met with an almost impenetrable wall of resistance and opposition until he published his book, *Tower of Babel*, on January 2, 1952. Then small study groups were formed near several large cities in America. Later all the members who were able to relocate came together under Wetherill's direction in southeastern Pennsylvania.

So much for a brief history of the group that now brings you the good news of the ***law of absolute right***, and the ***awakening*** that it brings to a world population in deep trouble and chaos.

A few centuries ago the Founding Fathers of America did their best to establish a country ruled in a God-fearing way by representatives of the people. Newcomers from other countries who were willing to be governed by its Constitution and Bill of Rights were welcomed. Over the years, people came in droves. Now the divergence of thinking about whether the country should be transformed is causing much turmoil and confusion for the populace.

There is only one solution: everybody must obey creation's law of absolute right or suffer the consequences of disobedience to whoever or whatever is the creator of natural laws and all that exists of planet Earth.

Visit our colorful Website www.alphapub.com where several essays and seven books describe the changes called for by whoever or whatever created nature's law of absolute right. The material can be read, downloaded, and/or printed FREE.
This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of the late Mr. Wetherill. Please help by directing others to our Website so that they can learn that obeying this natural law provides a ***life that is both fair and well worth living****.*

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Cost estimates for expanding this imaginary infrastructure run to the hundreds of billions of dollars. But using one of those fast-charge stations could adversely impact the car's battery life in the long term. And you have to be careful, because in a world where gas cars often carry a 10-year/100,000-mile warranty, the Leaf's warranty is 3 years/36,000 miles.

The market for high-price, low-performance vehicles is finite. To get a sense of scale, there are about 250 million cars, SUVs, and light trucks on the road today. Somewhere between 10 million and 17 million new vehicles are sold each year depending on gas prices, the economy, etc. The Volt, meanwhile, will offer 10,000 units for sale next year. The Coda will have 14,000 this year. And Tesla, for all its hoopla, has manufactured about 1,300 cars to date.

A number of studies have examined people's willingness to buy EVs in the near and medium term. Most analysts predict that about 400,000 EVs will be sold annually by 2020. But to get to even this modest number we must stipulate that gas prices sharply increase, battery costs significantly decline, and that—this is the niftiest part of all—EV sales from 2017 to 2020 magically increase by *300 percent*.

Still, if you grant all of those assumptions, the total number of EVs on the road in 2020 will be in the neighborhood of 1.1 million. Which means that the sales of all electric cars in America will combine to average 110,000 units a year for the next decade. Last month Ford sold 47,433 of its F-series pick-up trucks.

The principal problem for EVs is cost. The Boston Consulting Group figures that the exorbitant prices of EVs won't be attractive to the average consumer until oil goes above $280 a barrel. Oil has never approached even half that price. And if EVs were to take off, they would create a problematic loop for themselves: The more electric cars, the less demand for oil, and the lower the price of gas—making EVs even less competitive. Any way you look at it, the electric car is a lousy business to be in, which probably explains why the federal government is elbow-deep in that business.

In an attempt to fulfill President Obama's EV goal, the government has been doing everything it can to get electric cars on the road. It started by goosing the supply side of the equation: Ford was given a $5.9 billion loan through the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Loan Program while Nissan was given $1.6 billion. Another $2.4 billion in outright grants was doled out to component makers from the stimulus package.

Auto-show babe not included

The government is backing up its bet by tinkering with the demand side, too. If you buy an EV, the feds give you $7,500 and rebates for purchasing home charging kits. Some states have their own incentives to sweeten the pot. California, for instance, adds another $5,000 in cash back. The Golden State even throws in a carpool sticker so that EV drivers can use the HOV lanes whenever they want.

In individual cases, the government is in even deeper. The Volt, for instance, received $240 million in Department of Energy grants; part of a $14 billion loan given to GM to retool production facilities; $150 million in stimulus to the Korean company that makes the Volt's battery; and $1.5 billion in incentives earmarked for consumers. (All of which leaves out the $50 billion bailout of General Motors.) Just to be clear: The feds were not a bunch of sap investors. When the government took over GM in 2009, a task force reported that the Volt "will likely be too expensive to be commercially successful in the short term." The green-eyeshades at the White House kept it anyway.

At Tesla it's even worse. Musk made his fortune the Internet way. He didn't create a product he could sell to consumers at a profit. Rather, he founded two websites which were bought out by bigger websites, minting him $22 million, and then $160 million, in rapid succession. And he's brought the Internet ethos to the car business. The production costs of a Tesla Roadster are reportedly $95,000. Many of the cars were pre-sold at $92,000. But Musk never planned to make a profit selling the Roadster: The cars were a bridge to the real money. In 2009, the government loaned Tesla $465 million. At the time, the entire company was valued at $500 million. That year Tesla produced 800 cars.

Tesla used the government's loan to purchase and prepare the Fremont facility—which once produced 450,000 cars per year. Which is more than the entire projected EV demand in 2020.

But that's the sort of fantasy world in which electric cars exist. In 2004, Tesla said it would develop its Roadster in two years for $25 million. It took four years and $140 million. In 2007, GM's Bob Lutz told *Newsweek* he envisioned selling hundreds of thousands of Volts a year, probably priced below $30,000. The company will make 10,000 Volts next year and sell them for $41,000 each. In 2009, Chrysler claimed it would have 500,000 electric cars on the road by 2013 under a new brand, ENVI. The ENVI group was shut down before it could even muster a single production design.

The great irony is that there probably *is* a niche for the EV. Cars have always been badges and the electric car is no different. But instead of saying "I'm richer than you are" or "I'm cooler than you are," the electric car says "I'm a better person than you are." In Barack Obama's America, surely there's a market for that. If only the rest of us weren't forced to subsidize it. ♦

NEWSCOM

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Brown China

The myth of an environmentally friendly People's Republic. BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

Beijing

"There's nothing we can do," the taxi driver says in heavily accented Mandarin, as he shrugs and lights a cigarette, "this is Beijing." His car is caught in a vast expanse of apparently stationary traffic, eight lanes across. We've inched forward less than half a mile in 45 minutes.

There are 4.5 million cars in the Chinese capital, and an average of 1,900 more are sold every day. By 2015, there will be 7 million cars here, the AP reported earlier this year, citing an estimate from the Beijing Transportation Research Center. As a result, the average driving speed will drop to about 9 mph. It's little surprise that on most days, Beijing and scores of other Chinese cities are shrouded in thick smog.

China, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman assures us, is undergoing a "Green Leap Forward," one that the United States should aim to emulate. Scribes at *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and a host of other national publications have similarly trumpeted the arrival of "Green China," and even President Obama used his Oval Office speech on the BP oil spill to claim that "countries like China are investing in clean energy jobs and industries that should be right here in America."

Yet the facts on the ground paint a starkly different picture. Consider the energy sector, the most polluting part of any economy. China surpassed the United States this summer as the world's largest energy user. The most recent statistics from the U.S. government indicate that 70 percent of China's energy needs are met by coal, 20 percent by oil, and only 10 percent by comparatively green sources like natural gas, hydroelectricity, wind, solar, and nuclear. The government is currently constructing 28 nuclear plants, as well as a host of wind farms and solar plants, but the CEO of State Grid Corporation, China's largest electricity provider, estimates that nuclear, wind, and solar will power only 6 percent of this immense nation by 2020. (It is not clear, moreover, that wind power produces any benefits: The *Wall Street Journal* reported last year that each time a wind farm is constructed in China, a coal-fired plant is built alongside it to mitigate the inherent instability of wind power.)

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While Friedman and others ballyhoo China's investments in green energy, Beijing is rapidly expanding its investment in fossil fuels. Michael Economides, an energy expert at the University of Houston, wrote recently on *Forbes*'s website of the "utterly massive level of spending that the Chinese have embarked upon in pursuit of expanding their traditional energy portfolio." Just this year, state-run energy companies have acquired shares in major oil drilling projects in Canada, Angola, and Brazil. One state-run enterprise lent the Venezuelan government $20 billion, and the debt will be repaid in oil.

But it is coal that is still king in China. The country mines far more coal than any other nation—almost three times as much annually as the second-place United States. There are no signs of a slowdown: Chinese coal production has tripled in the last 10 years alone, to roughly 3 billion tons per year. China's reliance on coal-fired power plants means that the country suffers from terribly polluted skies. Canadian scientists using NASA data have concluded that the air in eastern China is the world's most polluted, with the highest concentration of particulates. The European Union has also declared that only 1 percent of Chinese city dwellers enjoy safe air quality, and health experts blame air pollution for China's high rates of cancer and a host of other maladies. With China continuing to ramp up its coal production, the forecast for the country's skies remains smoggy for decades to come.

China's rivers and lakes represent another environmental disaster. A series of massive dams along the storied Yellow River are creating a dust bowl in central and western China and sending hundreds of thousands of peasants in search of fertile ground. The Yangtze is faring no better: Even the state-run *China Daily* says that the famous river is "cancerous" with pollution and warns that drinking water in cities like Shanghai could soon be endangered. (In 2008, a major tributary of the Yangtze turned "red and bubbly," and 200,000 people in central China lost access to clean drinking water.) Fetid rivers and streams are abundant, even here in the showplace capital. It's not uncommon to see poorer Chinese people washing their clothes and dishes in rivers thick with pollution and detritus.

In a move that would make Xerxes proud, Beijing is attempting to assert control of its waters. A project 60 years in the making (it was first envisioned by Chairman Mao in 1952), the Chinese government is building three canals to reroute water from rivers in the south of the country to the arid northern plains. It's a huge project, totaling over $60 billion in construction costs and, critics charge, wreaking environmental disaster. People worry that an undertaking on such a scale will cause soil erosion and landslides and decimate river ecosystems, not to mention displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

Since the early 1980s, the Chinese government has made the entirely defensible decision to stress economic growth over environmental protection. This has lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese people out of miserable poverty, which is something to celebrate. But the Chinese experience reminds us that if you want to achieve explosive economic growth, it's not easy being green. ♦

Ethan Epstein is a writer traveling in China.

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Fault Lines

The president's apologists look for scapegoats

By Noemie Emery

A few years ago, you met a dark, handsome stranger, with a cool, remote manner and a smooth line of talk. You didn't know him well, but he had a certain *je ne sais quoi* that you found irresistible. He was yourself, only better; yourself, only cooler; yourself, as you were in your dreams. You were a long-suffering liberal Democrat, and he was your airbrushed fantasy president come to life: FDR without polio, JFK without women, John Kerry with brains, Al Gore with charisma, Bill Clinton without those cringe-making vibes from Hot Springs. You swooned and you sighed, you got him elected, and you settled in to see how great life could be with someone like you in the Oval Office. And then things began to go wrong.

At first, the symptoms of trouble were small ones—a stimulus here, a GM bailout there—but the unemployment numbers kept inching up, and people got cross. You called them racists, clinging to guns and to God out of bitterness, but when they began to make up a majority of the country (including a large chunk of the president's former supporters), reality had to set in. Or rather, reality had to be acknowledged, within limits: Things were bad, and one had to admit it, but at the same time one couldn't blame him. He was in charge, but not really responsible; he was around, but somehow apart from his government. So the effects of his actions—recession, malaise, distress, unemployment—could never be traced to their source. It was the fault of George Bush, the fault of bad luck, the fault of the universe. Fault had to be outsourced, to external and sinister forces. And the forces you thought up were these:

It was the fault of the Republican party, that political juggernaut, which set out to subvert Barack Obama's agenda and did. Alas, the Republicans could only dream of such glories: with 40 votes in the Senate (until 2010) and 178 votes in the House, they were in no shape to do anything, and for most of 2009 were the tail to the kite and caboose to the train of an enormous revolt of onetime Obama supporters and independents that turned the political world on its ear. Shell-shocked and stunned, resigned to years in the wilderness, unsure whether to fight or make peace with this new force of nature, the GOP was curled in the fetal position in early 2009 when Rick Santelli's call for CNBC viewers to dump "some derivatives" into Lake Michigan set off a wave of spontaneous protests—from which the GOP at first stayed away. It was independents, not Republicans, who staged the mass rallies, grassroots voters—independents and Democrats included—who stormed the town halls in the summer of 2009. It was defections all year from Obama and Democrats that sent his (and their) numbers plunging from the sixties into the fifties, and then to the forties, and put the fear of God into both. It was former Obama voters who smacked Obama and Democrats hard in the off-year elections, with blowouts and upsets in Virginia and in New Jersey, both of which he had won in 2008, and, in the biggest blow of all two months later in Massachusetts, when they gave Ted Kennedy's Senate seat to Scott Brown. Republicans couldn't stop health care in Congress: They needed help from Democrats and independent voters who were unnerved by the size and expense of the measure, and raised hell with their members back home. Democrats, had they hung tough, could have passed anything, as they would later prove and now sometimes seem to regret.

Obama was elected in 2008 because independents, who had gone back and forth between him and John McCain for most of the summer (and swung to McCain after his convention), came back to Obama in mid-September in the course of the massive financial implosion, and gave him their votes by eight points. Two years later, he had lost the support of most of these voters. This was not the Republicans' fault. It was not the fault of the Republicans that Obama's approval ratings were under water in all the swing states—Florida, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina among them—that he wrested from George W. Bush in 2008, as well as in states such as Pennsylvania that had been Democratic for many years. This August, *Time* magazine sent reporters into states that Obama had carried, and found "a sense of disap-

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pointment, bordering on betrayal," with the fear most often mentioned being "that Obama is taking the country somewhere they don't want to go." *Time* found that "roughly 1 in 3 of the president's 2008 supporters had serious questions about government spending solutions," that in Nevada, a state he carried with 55 percent of the vote, only 29 percent of likely voters thought that his actions had "helped the economy." "He's trying to Europeanize us, and the Europeans are going the other way. The entire American spirit is being broken," said an Obama voter and donor in South Bend, Indiana. In Elkhart, Indiana, *Time* found a Republican candidate who said she was "often approached by Obama voters who want[ed] to vent." "Betrayed by the health care vote," "What are they thinking when it comes to spending?" and "He's not what I voted for," were among the many complaints. These are not Republicans, and Republicans did not make them say this. Oddly enough, these details and these stories do not appear often in your tales of events.

If not the GOP, then it's the Senate that did it, that "sclerotic, wasteful, unhappy body" in the words of George Packer of the *New Yorker*; that "profoundly undemocratic" institution, according to E.J. Dionne of the *Washington Post*; or, according to *New York* magazine's John Heilemann, "a tiny band of verbose old folks" standing in the way of 300 million, who presumably clamor for left-wing ideas. The Senate, you claim, was trying to thwart the passage of health care legislation thanks to its "absurd" rules, which tip power in favor of the big, square, empty red states, and away from the smaller, more oddly shaped ones that are teeming with Democrats. "Senators representing 63 percent of the public vote for [Obamacare], those representing 37 percent vote against it. The bill fails," said James Fallows in the *Atlantic*, and he does have a point, but the problem with health care reform had nothing to do with Senate rules. The Senate did end up thwarting the will of the people, but not in the way that you imagined. The problem with the Senate in this instance was that most of the Democrats who voted for health care were thwarting the will of their own voters.

The split Fallows evoked to show the system's unfairness was 63-37. This is close, *in reverse*, to the 60-40 split by which the public at large opposed Obamacare by the time it passed, and by which they oppose it to this day. Democrats spent millions of dollars buying the votes of Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and Ben Nelson (D-Nebr.), whose states hated Obamacare all the more when they found out about it. The Democratic leadership applied immense pressure to Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, who is losing her race for reelection by 20-plus points. Virginia (which voted for Obama) gave Bob McDonnell an 18-point win in the 2009 governor's race, which was understood to be in part a referendum on the president's health care plan; Virginia's two Democrats in the Senate nonetheless voted to pass it. That same day, New Jersey swung 12 points away from Obama to elect Chris Christie as governor. Six weeks later, its two Democrats in the Senate voted to pass Obamacare. Massachusetts (which voted for Obama) elected Scott Brown on his explicit pledge to stop health care; the state's two Democratic senators voted to pass it. The only problem with the Senate here was not structural, but a slipped timing gear: Sentiments changed in 2009 so quickly that those Democrats elected in the "wave" years of 2006 and 2008 no longer spoke for what their voters wished done. In 2009-2010, the Republican caucus, outnumbered by three-to-two in the Senate, nonetheless spoke for the majority of the country. The Senate did, in this instance, throttle democracy. But not in the way that you claimed.

It was the fault of the media: While George Packer, E.J. Dionne, and friends were blaming the evil old Senate for the woes of Obama, Todd Purdum, their Condé Nast comrade at *Vanity Fair*, was placing the blame for the president's problems right at the feet of . . . the press. "He faces the most hyperkinetic, souped-up, tricked out, trivialized and combative media environment . . . ever experienced," Purdum explained, complaining of "the ability of . . . any rumor to get a foothold in the public discussion and go viral in the broader media," the presence of Fox News on the national airwaves, the fact that "journalists who should know better ask the damnedest questions" just to get air time, and "the long-building trend toward coverage of the presidency and politics as pure sport."

He ought to know. The magazine that Purdum writes for has since 2003 poured rivers of sludge on George W. Bush, John McCain, and all kinds of conservatives; spent an inordinate amount of time on the political insights of one Levi Johnston; and recently ran the latest of what seems like a million hit-pieces on Sarah Palin, an article so inaccurate, badly sourced, and misleading that even people who didn't like Palin complained. Purdum says in all seriousness that Obama aide Valerie Jarrett "looks back wistfully to a time when credible people could put a stamp of reliability on information and opinion: 'Walter Cronkite would get on and say the truth, and people believed the media.' . . . Today, no single media figure or outlet has that power to end debate." He does not say that one reason the media are no longer looked up to is that Dan Rather, Cronkite's successor at the Tiffany network, was canned in 2004 when he tried to kneecap President Bush in the campaign's final months by charging him with dereliction

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of duty in the Texas Air National Guard 30 years earlier, based on documents said to date from the 1970s, which turned out to have been written on Microsoft Word.

This is the same media that voted about 90 to 10 for John Kerry and almost 95 to 5 for Barack Obama, and compared the latter in the course of the campaign and in its aftermath not only to Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan, but to the Messiah and God. Of course, it is possible that the press *did* hurt Obama, but only by (a) pitching expectations so high that no one could meet them, and (b) inflating his swelled head even further, so that he believed that he really had magical powers, could talk people into practically anything, could sell people on ideas they detested, and then save his followers from electoral harm.

It's the fault of the mad: In the eyes of some of your number, the country's gone bonkers, for no apparent reason at all. It's a "weird mass nervous breakdown," says Maureen Dowd, who ought to know weird when she sees it. Packer agrees. "The main fact of our lives is the overwhelming force of unreason," he intones in the *New Yorker*. "Evidence, knowledge, argument, proportionality, nuance, complexity, and the other indispensable tools of the liberal mind don't stand a chance." This of course goes to explain why The One has lost traction: He's "a rational man running a most irrational nation" in Dowd's estimation, or, as Packer has put it, "he's the voice of reason incarnate, and maybe he's too sane to be heard." Well, if you say so. But this is a form of dementia that comes and goes oddly: In the '08 campaign the nation was wonderfully rational. It was even more so at Obama's inaugural, when his approval ratings were soaring, but then, as winter became spring and spring became summer, the grip on reality started to fade. It slipped with the stimulus package; slipped even more with Government Motors; and by August, with both the national debt and the town halls on fire, the last trace of reason had disappeared.

This sanity index also tracks the racism quotient, and both are tied to Obama's poll ratings: When they are up in the 60s, the country is sane and postracial; in the 50s, it becomes borderline; in the 40s, the country is both xenophobic and stark, raving mad. Could Obama himself have done anything to contribute to this outbreak of unreason? Perish the thought. All he did was push a left-wing agenda on a center-right country, wage wars on the Tea Party, Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and Chief Justice John Roberts, mock his opponents and malign them as racists, blow through the six thousand warning signs that health care was politically toxic, blast his way through legal roadblocks set up in the Senate by means people saw as abuses of power, and celebrate later with gloating and song. In their new book *Mad as Hell*, about the life and times of the Tea Party movement, pollsters Doug Schoen and Scott Rasmussen say that the feeling of being deliberately ignored and dismissed by the people in power is what fuels that movement.

In fact, the movement's response to this assault on its character has been remarkably measured. Its members have expressed themselves calmly, in speech and writing. They assembled peaceably for redress of grievances. They backed candidates, campaigned for them, and accepted defeat with good grace when their members were beaten: It was the establishment "moderates" who behaved like bad sports. The charges of racism against them appear to be specious and planted by Democrats, and the rare instances of violence that have occurred in their ambit were visited on them by the president's backers. Meanwhile, the president has behaved as if he lived in an alternative universe, blocking out all available evidence that the entire country is not like Hyde Park.

The Tea Party is about to deliver a blow that, if Obama is rational, ought to rock his foundations. We'll see then who is in touch with the real world.

It's the narrative, or lack of it, that is the real problem: People don't know what Obama's done. Or they do know, but they haven't absorbed it. "They aren't rationally aligning belief and action," says *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter. E.J. Dionne says Obama has engineered "an expansion of government without an explanation for how this modestly larger government will enhance both private well-being and private sector growth." (Perhaps no explanation is made because no explanation is possible, but we'll let this one pass.) "His achievements are historic," *Time*'s Joe Klein informs us, "but he hasn't wrapped them up in an ideological bumper sticker—or provided some neat way for the public to understand it, or pretended to be a yeoman simpleton, noshing on pork rinds [or] clearing brush." Perhaps he should put the golf clubs aside, and get out the weed whacker. But perhaps this isn't the problem at all.

Perhaps the problem isn't the lack of a narrative, but that the public has formed one already, and it seems to go something like this: A young community-organizer-cum-seminar-leader, having led a sheltered political life in deep blue America, is swept into office on the strength of a financial collapse weeks before the election plus the emotional need for a biracial redeemer. He misreads the country, the times, and his mandate, pushes through plans to turn the country into a social democ-

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racy at the exact moment that model is proving unworkable, governs in every way against the will of the people, and proves himself to be a bad politician, a coalition-destroyer, a fish out of water, and over his head. This simple line explains things much better than the convoluted tales that you keep coming up with. But it's the one thought you cannot abide. Now and then the strain gets to be too much and reality breaks through for a moment. *Time*'s Mark Halperin had an emperor's-new-clothes moment last week ("the White House is . . . isolated, insular, arrogant and clueless about how to get along with or persuade members of Congress, the media, the business community or working-class voters"). But for the rest of you, Obama's still your dream of a man, and you cannot deny him. Dreams, as they say, die hard.

"Sitting there in the press conference today with President Obama, you can almost hear sort of the classical music in the background," mused Howard Fineman on *Hardball*. "It was a stately thing and a mature discussion." "He's an Oxford don," broke in Chris Matthews, "elegantly presenting himself, elegantly expressing himself on a very high level." On an earlier show, Matthews had called the president "almost pluperfect." On September 16, he elaborated: "People like him. They love his upbringing . . . the way he made it, the way he spoke, the way he presented himself. I like the cut of this guy."

So do you all. So you all club together in making excuses, in blaming the Senate, the press, and the system, in believing that somehow, beyond all hope and reason, The One has things under control. He looks to the long view. He is above this. The woes of the day do not count.

"Obama's gamble is that if you look after the doing of the presidency, the selling of the presidency will look after itself," or so Todd Purdum tells us. "The short-term price may come in stalled poll numbers, electoral setbacks, and endless contradictory advice [but] the payoff . . . lies out on some future horizon" that only he sees.

It better be out there, for the alternative is much too depressing. He's your ideal, and if he fails, it means that the things that you value—the smoothness, the snark, the verbal facility, the elevation of talk as against thought and action, the veneer of worldliness; the right schools, the right clothes, the right frame of reference; the nuance; the sophistication—that these things are, in the real world, not all that important.

And then, of course, neither are you. ♦

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Power Surge

A pathway towards next generation energy

By Steven F. Hayward

With the collapse of cap and trade in the Senate and the prospects dim for a measly renewable-energy mandate for electric utilities in a lame duck session, the dreams and schemes of the climate campaign and energy reformers have hit the wall. As long as oil prices remain moderate and gasoline prices continue to ease off, energy policy is on the back burner again, and the burner has been turned off. The House Republicans' recent "Pledge to America" makes only passing mention of energy, which is unlikely to be a priority in the next Congress unless it repeals the imminent ban on incandescent light bulbs. The late senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once derided Bill Clinton's support for welfare reform as "boob bait for bubbas"; likewise, President Obama's recent declaration that he would make "piecemeal" energy and climate legislation a priority next year should be understood as "gooey grist for greens" who are furious that the White House didn't put its weight fully behind cap and trade. More likely the White House and most Hill Democrats never want to hear the phrase "cap and trade" ever again.

Energy Policy IN 2011

One reason energy is about to enter a new epicycle of political neglect is that America does not have an inherent energy problem. We have decades of coal supplies and soaring reserves of natural gas opening new possibilities for diversifying our energy mix. What we do have is a liquid fuels problem—our old friend oil, which is vital for our system of surface transportation. We import 60 percent of our oil, and that figure is likely to increase unless we get serious about more domestic production. But even if we increase domestic oil supplies, we will be affected by turmoil in the oil market. Although the global oil market appears stable for the foreseeable future, the fact that so much of the world's oil supply is controlled by state-owned companies means oil is susceptible to political manipulation, never mind the nightmare scenario of a general war in the Middle East. Beyond the oil problem, the issue of climate change is not going to go away. Despite the weaknesses of the case for catastrophic global warming, it would be a mistake for responsible political leaders to dismiss any possibility of human-influenced climate change decades ahead.

The problem with seeing a way forward is that existing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and biofuels are not only much more expensive than fossil fuels, but also not scalable to meet the energy needs of this country or any other. More nuclear power is fine, but it will do little for our liquid fuels vulnerability. The clichés about "green jobs" are all fluff and no fold, and our massive subsidies and tax credits for "renewable" energy should be thought of as energy Keynesianism. Government energy research programs are making some useful technical progress, but very little seems to get outside the labs to commercial development. Is there a way for government to adopt an energy policy that avoids wasting money on inferior energy sources and unproductive laboratory research and that could gain bipartisan support in today's bitterly polarized climate? There just might be.

For over a year, an informal working group of conservatives, centrists, and liberals have been meeting regularly in Washington with a view to seeing whether a fresh start can be made on energy innovation. The core group included several of us from the American Enterprise Institute, Mark Muro of the Brookings Institution, and Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus of the left-leaning Breakthrough Institute, though a wider circle of people from right, left, and center also participated in the process. The group came together initially because of a broad agreement about three points: that cap and trade was a defective idea and unlikely to generate serious energy innovation even if it passed; that the business-as-usual approach of subsidizing existing alternative energy sources was unpromising and wasteful; and that the nation was underinvesting in energy innovation.

Start with the last point. America's energy sector invests comparatively little in basic research on energy innovation, and most research investment is directed toward improving existing production technologies for fossil fuels (such as the directional drilling that has unlocked shale gas), or

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increasing electric generation efficiency, rather than developing next-generation technology. The energy industry invests only about 1 percent of revenues on R&D, a small fraction of the 15 or 20 percent that innovation-intensive industries such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals typically invest. Even with ramped up energy research spending under the stimulus, the government still spends five times more on medical research through the National Institutes of Health, and over ten times more on defense research. While this underinvestment may not be a market failure strictly speaking, the importance of energy to modern life—it is rightly called the "master resource" that makes all other economic activity possible—combined with the geopolitical vulnerability of the sector, makes it an area deserving a serious long-term policy.

Shellenberger and Nordhaus broke with environmental orthodoxy with a blindingly simple insight that became the touchstone for our working group: The path to a green or clean energy future lies not in making fossil fuels artificially more expensive but in making new energy sources cheaper than fossil fuels, and on a large scale. In other words, innovation instead of taxation. Current energy research and deployment policies do little to advance this goal. Federal subsidies and tax incentives for wind and solar power, for example, are primarily focused on supporting the deployment of existing technologies at current high prices, rather than on driving technology improvement to reduce their unsubsidized price. Renewable portfolio standards, which require that utilities purchase a certain percentage of electricity generation from renewable sources, encourage deployment of the lowest-cost renewable energy technology available—generally wind power—while doing little to drive down the price of other, higher-cost clean energy technologies, such as solar panels, that may have the potential to become much cheaper in the long term. Ethanol mandates and subsidies, meanwhile, threaten to make us dependent on an inferior, environmentally damaging fuel that might inhibit the adoption of potentially more promising fuels such as algae-based diesel. All of the subsidies and tax breaks for current-generation renewable energy should be phased out.

So how can the government sponsor energy research and development that delivers the boon without the doggle? The first step is a long-overdue increase in energy science funding, something that liberals and conservatives have long agreed is necessary. This should be targeted to solve the well-known obstacles to improving the performance of energy technologies. Advances in materials sciences could result in future generations of far more efficient solar panels and more powerful batteries. Genetic engineering and advances in biology are required to manufacture clean-burning biofuels more cheaply. The nation should also train and retain a new generation of energy scientists and engineers. We propose a national commitment to spend $500 million annually on energy education scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, and graduate research grants to create a cadre of "energy engineers" similar to the national commitment that produced a generation of aerospace and computer engineers after Sputnik.

Second, we should transform the way energy innovation is carried out. Currently, most energy research is pursued in settings and through programs that keep it divorced from the demands of the private sector. Universities and national laboratories need to work much more closely with private firms, entrepreneurs, and investors. The need to transform America's energy innovation system has been broadly recognized in a slew of recent studies. While the details may vary, the consensus is clear: America should create a national network of decentralized energy innovation institutes—whether we call them Energy Discovery Innovation Institutes or the National Institutes of Energy or something else—that can bring corporate, university, and government scientists together to tackle big energy problems, while strengthening diverse, regional clean technology clusters. Modeled after sustained federal investments made in the '40s, '50s, and '60s that assisted the rise of Silicon Valley, this effort would cost about $5 billion annually.

Third, driving innovation and price declines requires that the government act directly as a demanding customer to spur the early commercialization and large-scale deployment of cutting edge technologies. Today, firms get subsidies that reward production of more of the same product, instead of innovation that results in lower prices. This framework should be turned on its head. Energy technologies should receive federal deployment funding only to the extent they are becoming cheaper in unsubsidized terms. Either technologies continue to come down in price or they are cut off from future public investment.

The Department of Defense has a long track record of using the power of procurement successfully to drive the commercialization and improvement of everything from radios and microchips to camera lenses and lasers. In contrast, the Department of Energy has never really played this role. Energy Secretary Steven Chu deserves applause for his efforts to make his department a more effective funder of breakthrough research, but the agency has no way to either procure or use energy technologies at commercial scale. The Department of Defense should help fill this void, once again using procurement to advance a range of potential dual-use energy innovations.

There are good national security reasons for the Pentagon to play an expanded role in securing America's new energy future. The U.S. military uses more oil than Sweden

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and more electricity than Denmark, and every $10 increase in the price of oil costs the Department of Defense more than $1 billion, sapping money that should be used to equip our troops for their critical missions at home and abroad. With fuel convoys costing both lives and money every day in Iraq and Afghanistan, questions of energy are understandably high on the list of the Pentagon's priorities.

The department should help establish closer linkages between research and procurement. This close connection was key to the successful history of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), famous for having invented the Internet, GPS, and countless other spin-off technologies we now take for granted. Congress made a good move in funding an ARPA-E program for energy. But while the Department of Energy is not set up to be a major user of energy technologies, the Pentagon has both the opportunity and the urgent need to use them. The Defense Department can play a greater role in administering ARPA-E and making sure that breakthrough energy discoveries become real-world technologies.

The USS Jimmy Carter*: The DOD could help fund energy innovation.*

The Pentagon is already looking at the potential of next generation nuclear reactors. For decades, small reactors between one-tenth and one-twentieth the size of existing power plants have been used to power American aircraft carriers and submarines. New modular reactor designs are smaller, safer, and cheaper than older designs and have the potential to be affordably mass-manufactured. We should not bank everything on a single technology or design; the Defense Department should have the budget to do the same for other promising energy technologies, from advanced solar and geothermal to biofuels and batteries. But longtime opponents of nuclear power must rethink their opposition given the potential of new nuclear plants to solve several energy problems—economic, environmental, health, and safety—at once.

All told, this framework would cost between $15 and $25 billion per year, less than one-third what we spend on defense research. In today's fiscal climate, any new spending should be paid for and should be linked to the affected sector. This could be done through several mechanisms, starting with a phaseout of subsidies for wind, solar, and fossil fuels alike, an increase in the royalties charged to oil and gas companies for production on public leases, or a $5 a ton carbon tax. The mention of a carbon tax will set off some alarm bells, but this low level (about five cents a gallon of gasoline, less than the seasonal fluctuation in pump prices) would neither affect consumer behavior nor change the economics of fossil fuels. Several environmentalists have expressed disappointment in this modest proposal, unable to grasp that it is intended as a revenue measure, not a behavior- or market-changing measure.

No doubt critics will say this level of state involvement in promoting technological innovation doesn't sound very Reaganite, but they are wrong. Just as Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative was intended to be a long-range game changer rather than just another weapons system, this energy strategy is intended to reestablish the United States as the global leader in energy innovation and potentially upend the geopolitics of energy. I share all of the general reservations and skepticism about government-sponsored research and development. Yet for all of the boondoggles one can rightly point to, such as Jimmy Carter's hapless Synfuels Corporation, there is also a record of government-sponsored technology achievement that it would be churlish to overlook. The lesson is that government investments succeed not when they are blanket subsidies but when they are targeted to specific outcomes, such as developing computers to enable rocket systems, building a communications network to survive a nuclear attack, or creating increasingly efficient and powerful jet engines. These public investments and supporting regulatory changes paid off handsomely in personal computers, the Internet, and both commercial air travel and the gas turbines used in modern natural gas power plants. Government-sponsored research in biochemistry has played a substantial role in the development of new pharmaceuticals.

There are no guarantees that this framework will deliver quickly or be free of failures along the way. (To the contrary, if there are few failures it will mean the program isn't bold enough.) But with China committing as much as $740 billion to basic energy research over the next decade and South Korea dedicating 1 percent of its GDP for the same purpose, the United States risks being a laggard in the energy sector. And that's more than just an economic risk. ♦

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The Roots of Lunacy

How not to understand Obama

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

I remember a press conference in 1993 got up by Empower America, a now-forgotten Republican think tank. The purpose was to mark the end of the first year of the Clinton administration. A murderers row of famous-for-Washington conservatives took turns denouncing the Democrats who had seized the White House after a dozen years of Republican benevolence. The upshot of the press conference was tersely summarized by Jack Kemp, a man not known for terseness: President Clinton, Kemp said, had brought to Washington something it had never seen before, the "first frankly left-wing administration in history."

In retrospect, of course, the charge looks nuts. We know now that within another 18 months, playing defense against a newly elected Republican Congress, Clinton was triangulating his way to the most conservative Democratic administration since the great Cleveland was trundled back to New Jersey. Yet even then, in 1993, a few wise and dispassionate observers saw that Kemp's alarm was wildly overdone. In that first year, Clinton had embraced economic policies that made him, as he privately lamented, an "Eisenhower Republican." Inevitably he made a few wacky appointments (Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders) but overbalanced each with much saner and more significant choices (Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen). He modified but didn't eliminate the ban on gays in the military. After a brief hesitation, he worked hard for the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

His most "frankly left-wing" idea, a nationalized health care system, was no more outlandish than the plan Harry Truman had pushed in the late 1940s. And by 1993 Truman was being lionized by Republicans as a tough-minded man of the people, far preferable, professional conservatives said, to the Clinton radicals who had lately made his once-noble party a crash pad for ex-hippies.

The Roots of Obama's Rage
by Dinesh D'Souza
Regnery, 258 pp., $27.95

Barack Obama Sr., ca. 1965

OBAMA FOR AMERICA / HANDOUT / REUTERS / CORBIS

Now it's 2010, and among his former enemies, Clinton is enjoying a Truman-like renaissance. Even such sweaty anti-Clinton paranoiacs as the investigative journalist Christopher Ruddy and the newspaper proprietor Richard Mellon Scaife have decided he wasn't so bad after all. It's almost enough to make you forget the insanity that gripped Clinton's political opponents. Kemp didn't know the half of it! Throughout the nineties I heard mainstream Republicans describe the president as a shameless womanizer and a closeted homosexual, a cokehead and a drunk, a wife beater and a wimp, a hick and a Machiavel, a committed pacifist and a reckless militarist who launched unnecessary airstrikes in faraway lands to distract the public's attention from all of the above.

At gatherings of conservative activists the president was referred to, seriously, as a "Manchurian candidate." Capitol Hill staffers speculated darkly about the "missing five days" on a trip Clinton had taken to Moscow as a graduate student. Respectable conservatives in the media—William Safire, Robert Novak, Rush Limbaugh—encouraged the suspicion that Clinton's White House attorney, a manic depressive named Vincent Foster, did not commit suicide, as all available evidence suggested, but had been murdered by parties unknown, to hush up an unspeakable secret from the president's past.

So what happened? How did the left-wing, coke-snorting Manchurian candidate become the fondly remembered Democrat-you-could-do-business-with—"good old Bill," in Sean Hannity's phrase?

Barack Obama is what happened. The partisan mind—left-wing or right-wing, Republican or Democrat—is incapable of maintaining more than one

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oversized object of irrational contempt at a time. When Obama took his place in the Republican imagination, his titanic awfulness crowded out the horrors of Bad Old Bill; Clinton's five days in Moscow were replaced by Obama's three years in that mysterious Indonesian "madrassa."

We should probably be grateful for this psychological limitation. Without it the negativity of our politics would be relentless. Like Ronald Reagan before him, George W. Bush was reviled for eight years by Democrats driven mad by a sputtering rage—the "most right-wing president in history"!—but it's only a matter of time until they rediscover him as a mild-mannered figure, the signer of campaign finance reform, funder of African AIDS relief, would-be grantor of amnesty to illegal aliens; an able if sometimes misguided man whose public service stands in stark contrast to whatever revolting Republicans have come after him. The Dubya renaissance will begin the moment President Christie takes his hand off the Bible and begins his Inaugural Address.

It's in this light that the anti-Obama hysteria of recent months should be seen. Among professionals, political loyalties and hates are as changeable as the weather, bearing no relation to the plain evidence that normal people try to rely on. Taking the long view means never taking them seriously. Lucky for us, the hysterics make it so easy not to take them seriously.

On the evidence of his new book, we can't be sure if Dinesh D'Souza is a hysteric or a cynic. Newt Gingrich, for his part, thinks D'Souza is a visionary, and he's been praising the visionary and his book with the patented Gingrichian intensity. D'Souza is the possessor of a "stunning insight," Gingrich said recently, in an interview with National Review Online's Robert Costa. This insight is "the most profound insight I have read in the last six years about Barack Obama," Gingrich continued, while poor Costa looked for a table to duck under. "Only if you understand Kenyan, anticolonial behavior can you piece together [Obama's actions]. That is the most accurate, predictive model for his behavior."

As a professional partisan with a Ph.D., Newt Gingrich will take anything seriously if it suits his immediate purpose and has the necessary intellectual pretensions (whatever happened to the Tofflers anyway?). D'Souza's thesis, with its exoticism (Kenya) and its scholarly tags (anticolonial behavior), looks tailor-made for the former speaker. The insight with which D'Souza has stunned him is purely abstract and syllogistic: (1) Barack Obama really admired his father, Barack Obama Sr., and wanted to be like him; (2) Obama Sr. grew up in Kenya and became an anticolonial agitator; therefore (3) Obama Jr. wants to be an anticolonial agitator, too, and since he's simultaneously president of the United States, he gets to be anticolonial in a very big way and drag us along with him.

There's no need to go looking for more complicated theories. Yet there's a cramp in the mind of the committed party hack, a terrible need to believe that one's adversaries are more ominous or sinister than observable reality suggests.

"The central tenets of [Obama Sr.'s] anticolonial ideology," D'Souza writes, "are alive and well three decades later in the White House. . . . We are today living out the script for America and the world that was dreamt up not by Obama but by Obama's father."

From that set of radical ideas flows every policy of Obama's that has annoyed Republicans and confounded the public: the bank bailouts, the takeover of the auto industry, the huge fiscal stimulus, the health care bill, the hostility to the rich, the feckless approach to foreign affairs, even NASA's budget cuts. D'Souza applies his insight with a clever simulation of the scientific method, insisting on his own clinical detachment at every step. Sometimes he sounds like a lab technician holding up a petri dish to a classroom of third-graders. "The best way to verify a theory is to test its explanatory power," he writes, pedantically. "If the theory can account for Obama's major policies and . . . also explain the little details about Obama, details that otherwise seem puzzling or mysterious, that would give our paradigm a degree of confirmation that very few comprehensive theories enjoy in politics."

Readers will not be shocked that D'Souza's paradigm easily passes D'Souza's test, thanks to the author's misstatements of fact, leaps in logic, and pointlessly elaborate argumentation. The misstatements range from the very small to the very large. As "further evidence that this anticolonial reading is on the right track," he cites Obama's press conference after the Gulf oil spill.

"Time and again," he writes, Obama "condemned 'British Petroleum'—an interesting term since the company long ago changed its name to BP. Given our anticolonial theory, it's no surprise that Obama wanted to remind Americans of what BP used to stand for."

Right you are, Holmes! Except . . . I've read the transcript of the press conference, and Obama didn't make a single reference to British Petroleum—a name which, in any event, is commonly used by many people of a certain age (including me) who are sworn enemies of anticolonialism. D'Souza makes many errors of this sort, citing facts that aren't facts in support of an otherwise unsupported conclusion. He says that Obama, in his memoir *Dreams from My Father*, never mentions his father's drunkenness. Obama mentions it often. Indeed, D'Souza misreads the entire memoir: Far from admiring his father and emulating him, Obama makes his disillusionment with his father one of the themes of his own life story.

And where facts are missing altogether, faulty reasoning bolsters the case. "Wonder why Obama went to Harvard?" D'Souza slyly asks. "Here is a clue: It is the leading academic institution in

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America. And here's another: His father went there." Forget that neither of these facts is a clue, technically. Surely the first assertion is enough to adequately answer the question without recourse to the second, which is simply gratuitous as well as conjectural. But D'Souza always sees absence of evidence as evidence of something or other.

Let's linger at Harvard a moment longer. "At Harvard," D'Souza writes, "his real mentor was Roberto Mangabeira Unger." Unger is a brilliant crackpot who championed critical legal studies, a left-wing academic fad of the 1980s. I've never heard before that Unger served as the president's mentor. How does D'Souza know it? "Obama took two of Unger's courses," he writes. Well, then. "Obama's attraction to Unger's work is obvious." Obvious, but undemonstrated. "So what does Obama say about Unger in his speeches and writings? Nothing." Aha! "Unger has simply disappeared from Obama's official record, and not because his influence was minor; in fact, quite the opposite." QED.

In this respect it's worth mentioning the just-released *Radical-in-Chief*, a long, elaborately annotated study in which the writer Stanley Kurtz aims to prove that Obama is a socialist—a term that D'Souza, in his much less careful book, explicitly rejects in favor of "anticolonialist." Yet Kurtz, in 485 pages tracing Obama's intellectual geneology, never once mentions Unger. These guys have got to get on the same page.

Will this confusion—the uncertainty over whether Obama is an anticolonialist or a socialist, evil or merely deranged—unsettle the audience that D'Souza writes for? Probably not. A week after its release, *The Roots of Obama's Rage* appeared at number four on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Buyers of partisan books know what they like, and D'Souza is happy to give it to them. Yet the most innocent among them, those readers not yet trained in the Pavlovian relationship between these authors and their eager customers, might want to consider how unnecessary D'Souza's theory and its "explanatory power" are.

There is, indeed, a name for the beliefs that motivate President Obama, but it's not anticolonialism; it's not even socialism. It's liberalism!

Nearly everything that Obama has done as president, including the policies that D'Souza cites as proof of his inherited anticolonial ideology, would have been as eagerly pursued by President John Edwards or President John Kerry. And the points where they might differ—in the escalation of troops in Afghanistan, for example, or energetic education reform, or the push for nuclear power—mark Obama as more moderate than either of them. Come to that, many of the policies that D'Souza identifies as anticolonial were advanced by George W. Bush, who doesn't (I'm guessing) have an anticolonialist bone in his body. Bush began the auto bailout, approved TARP, vastly increased federal spending, expanded entitlements, pushed through a large and probably unnecessary fiscal stimulus of his own, and often chided Americans for their "addiction" to foreign oil.

Trained as a young man by Jesuits, D'Souza must be familiar with the principle of Occam's razor: The simplest explanation is always the best; if it fits the case at hand, there's no need to go looking for more complicated theories. Yet there's a cramp in the mind of the committed party hack, a terrible need to believe that one's adversaries are more ominous or sinister than observable reality suggests. Thus Bill Clinton wasn't merely an opportunist; he had to be a committed leftist and a criminal to boot. George W. Bush wasn't merely a well-meaning, incompetent conservative; he had to be a Falangist. What Obama truly represents—unchecked liberalism, *genus Americanus*—is worrisome enough without dragging in the sad, gin-soaked carcass of his father or the hypnotic power of Roberto Mangabeira Unger. ♦

B&A

The Roth Quest

Searching for God in a world of evil.

BY SAUL ROSENBERG

Philip Roth is perhaps the most celebrated of living American writers, the recipient of our most prestigious awards. It says something good about America that this is true of a Jewish writer who has written almost exclusively about Jews for 50 years, whether to contumely or praise.

Nemesis
by Philip Roth
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 304 pp., $26

For decades now, however, it has been almost all praise: far too much, really. For Roth's greatest contribution—the sheer verve and energy of the often vulgar, always fluent, sometimes astonishingly funny, and always distinctly Jewish narrative voice he created to investigate Jewish life in America—is far behind him. To cite only the most scabrous carrier of that voice, Alexander Portnoy: "Do me a favor, my people, and stick your suffering heritage up your suffering ass—I happen also to be a human being!" Anyone who can get past being offended will see that this is funny, alive, and a pretty sharp summary of Roth's theme through dozens of books: the struggle of his Jewish characters (and, it would appear, their author) to lead lives even fractionally independent of the Jews' overwhelming history.

This was Roth's voice, and his alone. To it, in his best work, he married a mastery of complex structure and the extraordinarily rare ability to play the postmodern game. To draw the reader into the traditional Coleridgean suspension of disbelief, and then promptly to

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disavow the whole thing as in one way or another "made up," as if it weren't all made up in the first place. To set off anew, the once-gulled reader again delightedly dragged along by the sheer creative "let there be" of Roth's prose. And then to do it once more. At the apex of his powers, Roth could play with the novel's fictional status as brilliantly as Nabokov in *Pale Fire* or Vargas Llosa in *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter.*

But if Roth's work has been marked by highlights such as *Goodbye, Columbus*, *Portnoy's Complaint*, and *The Counterlife*, there have been many low points. *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good*, early detours away from his quintessential subject, the Jews of his boyhood Newark, are mixed at best. The three novels that followed *Portnoy*—*Our Gang*, *The Breast*, and *The Great American Novel*—are failures. Of the many novels from *My Life as a Man* to *Operation Shylock*—what we might call Roth's two postmodern decades—none but *The Ghost Writer* and *The Counterlife* truly repays a second reading. It is true that *Sabbath's Theater* and particularly *American Pastoral*—extravagantly praised books—contain long passages of beautiful writing and profundities that may well be connected to Roth's "discovery" that the counterculture he had celebrated, and of which he was both champion and harbinger, was an unmitigated tragedy. *The Human Stain* also contains passages of great beauty as well as powerful ideas provocatively treated. But the books of the last decade mark a distinct falling off in both structural mastery and energy of prose.

Nemesis, plain of style and plainer of structure, offers no change of direction. The plain style works best when the material is truly explosive throughout. This is hard to do in a novel, even a short one. One thinks, rather, of the even prose in which Jonathan Swift's "projector" discusses his eight-page plan for selling Irish babies for their meat and skin, and so boosting the Irish economy. It is the distance between the serene tone and its appalling subject that has earned *A Modest Proposal* its place as the greatest satire in the English language. There is, in fact, a literary bomb that goes off late in *Nemesis*, and powerfully so. But by the time it comes, we have waited too long, and been too little entertained.

It is worth noting that James and Faulkner, the great American artists of the endlessly unexploded ordnance (and, I think, among the few American writers Roth would acknowledge as his masters), offer their readers remarkable passages on almost every page. Some passages we read at full jaw-drop, as it were, while we wait for Caspar Goodwood to kiss Isabel Archer, or to discover why Henry Sutpen killed Charles Bon. In *Nemesis*, Roth actually manages the opposite of James and Faulkner: Where, by patience and cunning elaboration, they make the merely shocking utterly shattering, Roth makes the truly shattering actually bearable, excepting only the surprise at the end.

Polio patient in an iron lung, 1945

BETTMANN / CORBIS

So much for style. *Nemesis*'s plot is quickly sketched. Polio stalks Jewish Weequahic in the stifling summer of 1944. Bucky Cantor, a healthy, patriotic young American rejected by the military for poor vision, works as a playground director and soon finds himself trying to keep his charges healthily occupied in the middle of an epidemic. Despite his efforts, however, the disease begins to claim "his" boys one by one, and panic seizes the community. Duty-bound, Cantor rejects his fiancée's pleas that he flee the city and the virus for the polio-free mountains, where she is a camp counselor. Tired out, and meditating a weekend break at the seaside, he changes his mind on impulse, and heads up into the mountains.

His astonished happiness at his romantic good fortune in the beautiful countryside is intermitted with dreadful guilt at having fled. The epidemic worsens, the playgrounds are closed (closing off, too, the possibility of return, the only avenue that might relieve his guilt), and the book descends into its closing nightmare.

Nemesis's characters are almost without exception Jewish, and Roth's relaxedness of style and structure is indicative of a more fundamental relaxation. His characterizations of Jews are largely positive, a phenomenon that first appeared in *American Pastoral*. Cantor's fiancée's father, a prosperous, bourgeois Jewish doctor, is the sanest, wisest, kindest character in the book. The goodness of Cantor's grandparents, who raised him, is unalloyed, and they are treated without a hint of parody. That the mocking treatment of Jewish boys and girls playing solemnly at an Indian "Grand Council" under the guidance of "Great Chief Blomback" lacks the energy to undermine any of this is another sign of the low energy of the novel.

It is all the more striking, then, that Roth's subject is one fit to make the most even-tempered modern writer rage. For Roth is haunted by the old, old demon of theodicy, the problem of God in a world full of evil. Roth returns to the question again and again, and it is the occasion for the very few energetic (and profane) flashes *Nemesis* offers. What other writer could soberly characterize God as "a sick

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f—k and an evil genius" and hope to be taken seriously by serious readers? It is tasteless, but it makes you sit up and listen. A shame, then, that there is so little else to listen to: Roth simply circles his point—what kind of fiend must God be to visit polio on children?—without much developing it.

We have seen what Roth's plainness of style has cost. It is here that the simplicity of his structure fails him completely. Even a subplot, the most basic complication of structure, would have allowed for a second view of the theme, a casting of light upon it from a different angle. And this second view always forces a conscientious author to develop his "main" view further, if only as a necessary matter of point and counterpoint.

Critics have sometimes suggested that the details of Roth's stories are generally subordinate to his "point." But it is no absolute failing for a writer to have a point, a theme about which he holds an opinion. Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* to justify the ways of God to men. Roth writes here to denounce them. Theodicy is one of the greatest of literary themes, particularly in a world in which Newton and Darwin have provided earthly explanations for phenomena that powered the argument for so many centuries.

But there is no Darwin in *Nemesis*, and his absence from a novel about a deadly virus is itself a demonstration of the book's failure to explore its avowed theme very far. Indeed, so shallow is Roth's treatment that we are left wondering whether, title notwithstanding, it is a conscious irony that a book so filled with rage at the Jewish God should take its one plot twist straight from Sophocles. One seeks also in vain for allegory, that other beneficiary of the plain style. Can there really be no second story hidden under the tale of a virus striking Jews in 1944? No literate reader can fail to think of Camus's *The Plague*, in which rat-Nazis infest Oran. But this, too, Roth has eschewed.

Early in his career, Roth wrote that "the test of any literary work is . . . the depth with which the writer reveals whatever he has chosen to represent." By his own measure, *Nemesis* does not merit a passing grade. ♦

B&A

Form Follows Fashion

Design for lifestyles of the rich and famous.

BY LIAM JULIAN

Morris Lapidus's Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach (1954)

CARL & ANN PURCELL / CORBIS

Modern architecture, pegged by Norman Mailer as a "totalitarian" style that "destroys the past," has long had its detractors. The Prince of Wales is one, and he has been on the warpath since 1984 when he criticized a planned modernist addition to London's National Gallery, analogizing it to "a monstrous carbuncle" invading the visage "of a much-loved and elegant friend." Ian Fleming was another, and went so far as to name the eponymous villain of *Goldfinger* (1959) after his neighbor, the architect Erno Goldfinger, who had demolished two Victorian houses on his street and replaced them with modern villas.

American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture
by Alice T. Friedman
Yale, 272 pp., $65

Modernism deserves much detraction, especially that modernism of manifestos and morality, the International Style, which was exported in the early 20th century from places like Weimar and Vienna and typified by the Bauhaus school. The Bauhauslers and their sympathists demanded honest design, swept history from memory, revered machines, and abhorred decoration. Their stark edifices were not just buildings but ideological constructions, materializations of a way of living. They, buildings and architects both, exuded purposefulness.

The International Style seeped into the United States in the 1920s but it always seemed a bit uneasy here, a socialistic architecture squirming in the world's most vociferously capitalistic nation. While some Americans liked the manifestos and saw beauty in the simplicity of white and silver boxes, most did not and found the

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International Style philosophically and aesthetically unpleasant.

To look, then, at many of the buildings that went up in America in the 1940s, and especially in the 1950s and '60s, is to look at buildings that seem to agree on only one approach: rejecting the International rulebook. These structures are by turns visual, structured, sensual, coy, bombastic—and a million other things in a million different ways. They are usually herded into the Mid-Century Modern taxon, but very generally so.

To classify this architecture more specifically, historians have typically opted to crumble the Mid-Century Modern wafer into subcategorical bits. But Alice T. Friedman takes the reverse tack, searching instead for what unites these disparate buildings. She focuses not on forms but on "the experiences and moods those forms suggest," and she concludes that these edifices, so visually variant, are nonetheless all "rooted in the notion of a distinctive American glamour and visual culture."

"The essence of glamour," she writes, "is magical storytelling . . . rich in possibility and rife with sensual pleasure."

Magical storytelling. Sensual pleasure. Off to Southern California we go, to visit Richard Neutra's famous Kaufmann Desert House, which sits just outside Palm Springs. The house was built in 1946 at the direction of Edgar Kaufmann, a philanthropist who owned department stores in Pittsburgh. He loved art and architecture and, since the mid-1930s, had been a generous, and tolerant, patron of Frank Lloyd Wright. (It was for Kaufmann that Wright built Fallingwater, that iconic cantilevered house in the southwest Pennsylvania woods.) But Kaufmann passed over Wright for his Palm Springs project and selected Neutra. Neutra had come to the United States from Vienna in 1923, when he was in his early thirties. He worked for Wright for a year before moving to California and making a name for himself seeking ambitious projects and aggressively publicizing his work. His early buildings—most notably the Lovell Health House, completed in 1929—were of the International Style, but he gradually left orthodox functionalism for a more relaxed modernist sensibility, a Southern California regional fashion that put contemporary technology and material to work in sun-glutted scapes.

Neutra believed that, in America, the consumer was king and he was keen to provide his clients with the buildings they wanted and not the buildings he wanted. (This could not, of course, be said of Wright.) Friedman cites a 1935 *Fortune* article which notes that Neutra began his work "not with a request in his hand for a façade, but with a questionnaire filled out with information about the habits, hobbies, measurements, [and] personalities of his clients." The architect knew that his clients wanted in their houses more than just modern functionality; they wanted houses that would pique their aspirational cravings.

The Kaufmann Desert House is one of Neutra's most acclaimed buildings. Unlike Fallingwater, the Desert House does not really integrate with its environment, nor does it try to. It sits apart from the craggy, dusty hillsides that surround it, its hard linear rooms contrasting with the desert forms. The structure is encompassed by a manmade landscape of cactuses and green lawns, a "machine in the garden," as Leo Marx liked to say. And yet the Desert House does exhibit a sensitivity to its setting. Its interior is softly demarcated by walls of glass, held in place by the thinnest of metal poles, which has the effect of bringing the desert inside, of making it part of the home. The unraised floor is at ground level, which further dissolves the distinction between inside and out.

Richard Neutra's Kaufmann Desert House (1946)

TIME & LIFE PICTURES

Then there's the glamour. In 1949, *Life* presented the Desert House to America in a double-page spread beneath the title, "Glamourized Houses: Photographer Julius Shulman Is a Master at Making Them Look Dramatic." Neutra hired Shulman to take the pictures, but he allowed the session to begin only after precisely mapping out the angles of all the shots, reminding Shulman to take no photos "where the workmanship deficiencies are played up." As Neutra later wrote, the resultant prints were not documentations of fact—they were never intended to

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be—but "approximate essential memory images" that evoked dreamy, fantastical ideas of glamorous living.

Friedman finds glamour in the work of other American modernists as well. A chapter on the Finnish-American Eero Saarinen presents a man who "imagined his buildings as inhabited and animated spaces" and who "cared deeply about the spiritual and psychological effects of his architecture." Visitors to Saarinen's original TWA Terminal—which opened in 1962 at what is today John F. Kennedy International Airport and was then known as Idlewild—would have known something of those effects. Swooping staircases, plunging concrete ceilings, swirling seating, bulging display boards, curving walls, and amoebic windows through which one could watch jets zipping by and blasting off—it all provided a real experience of the futuristic nature of flight, of air travel's own sort of jet-set glamour. The terminal, so sensual and alive, looked and felt as if it might itself bound up into the blue skies.

Another chapter is devoted to Morris Lapidus, a man who likely found the International Style axiom "less is more" fully vomitous. For Lapidus, more was more; his autobiography is entitled *Too Much Is Never Enough*. He is renowned for his Miami Beach hotels, especially the Eden Roc and the Fontainebleau, which mixed sleek, modernist façades with gaudy, frenetic interiors: epauletted bellboys hustling baggage around giant Doric columns and up veined marble stairs while the imitation Greco-Roman statuary look impassively on. Harry Mufson, for whom the Eden Roc was designed, famously told Lapidus, "I don't care if it's Baroque or Brooklyn, just get me plenty of glamour and make sure it screams luxury!" Mufson was not disappointed.

Saarinen and Lapidus, it's important to note, were critically savaged in their time. Both were castigated for their work's blatancy, its expressiveness, its readiness to accommodate consumerism's gauche whims. Saarinen was frequently disparaged for his coziness with big business (he was the go-to architect for corporate America) and Lapidus was dismissed for pandering to the most vulgar aspirations of the unsophisticated. Even Neutra was attacked—by Wright, among others—for obliging his clients to the extent that his buildings were compromises, lacking any weight or real value.

All three reputations have since been rehabilitated. Nonetheless, some of the criticism was correct: These new modernists, in walking away from the rules of the International Style, occasionally wandered too far, ending up in disorder.

What, then, is the American glamour that Friedman identifies in their buildings? Is it something of worth, or is it a pretty way to describe the smattery that results from the sort of consumerism that relishes baubles glittering from glossy pages? It is both, as Friedman herself acknowledges when she writes "that one group's idea of glamour is another's idea of hackneyed vulgarity." But what American glamour certainly is not is any of the worst aspects of modern architecture: It is not sanctimonious or aggressive; it is not Manichean; and it does not wish to destroy and forget all that came before. The glamorous buildings of mid-20th-century America are variously refined and offensive, but they do not presuppose their own greatness. They allow us to choose, and that is worth celebrating. ♦

B&A

Of Greeks and Jews

Old letters throw new light on Leo Strauss.

BY SUSANNE KLINGENSTEIN

A poll conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life this fall finds that 43 percent of Jews do not know that Moses Maimonides, codifier of Jewish law, author of the Thirteen Principles of Faith, physician, and philosopher extraordinaire, was Jewish.

They are the smart ones, Leo Strauss would have said, because Maimonides was not a Jew. On February 16, 1938, Strauss wrote to his longtime friend Jacob Klein: "One misunderstands Maimonides simply because one does not reckon with the possibility that he was an 'Averroist.'" Strauss knew, of course, that "to pull Maimonides out of Judaism is to pull out its foundation," but his recent insights into Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* had led him to the "determination that Maimonides in his beliefs was *absolutely* no Jew" because he was a philosopher. Strauss had long maintained, as he wrote to Klein, "the incompatibility in principle of philosophy and Judaism." Eight years earlier in Berlin, he had argued heatedly with Julius Guttmann that "Jewish philosophy" was a contradiction in terms. But he had never overtly proven the claim for a major Jewish figure, and now he was getting ready to do so.

"When I explode this bomb," Strauss wrote to Klein, "a great battle will be kindled."

Just eight days earlier he had tested his bomb during a conversation in New York with the Jewish scholar Nahum Norbert Glatzer, like Klein a friend from the early 1920s. Afterwards Strauss felt sorry about the effect he produced. We know this because the letter in which Strauss immediately tried to comfort Glatzer on February 8, 1938, is carefully kept

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(along with other correspondence Glatzer received) by his daughter Judith Wechsler, a professor of art history. She is currently making a film about her father and, in connection with retracing her father's life, had asked me to look over these (as yet unpublished) Strauss letters and to transcribe and translate them.

It's a slim sheaf: seven postcards and 14 letters written between 1924 and 1965. Strauss wrote with pencil and fountain pen, either in a hurried or cramped script that, as Harvey Mansfield put it dryly to me, is "notoriously difficult to decipher." Studying Strauss's handwriting through a magnifying glass for days on end in order to learn just which curlicue signified *ist*, *ich*, *in*, *der*, *des*, and so on had a surprising effect: I could feel myself falling through the rabbit hole of time and right into Strauss's thoughts. To be that close to the handwriting was to hear the scratch of the pen and feel the movement of the hand and to want to know the ideas that moved it.

Nahum Glatzer and Leo Strauss met at Franz Rosenzweig's Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus in Frankfurt, an adult education institute Rosenzweig had created to rattle the Jewish nerves of happily assimilated, complacent German Jews. Strauss ran seminars there on Hermann Cohen and Baruch Spinoza. He, the son of orthodox but uneducated rural Jews, had already gotten his doctorate at Hamburg in 1921 (at age 22) with a thesis directed by Ernst Cassirer.

Glatzer, four years younger than Strauss, was still finding himself. Raised in a well-read family of observant Jews, he was expected by his father, after graduating from a German gymnasium in Silesia in 1920, to enroll in Solomon Breuer's ultra-orthodox Talmud academy in Frankfurt. He stayed for two years but secretly joined the study group of the modern orthodox rabbi Nehemiah Anton Nobel, where he met Franz Rosenzweig. Glatzer had already read Martin Buber and visited him in 1920. Around 1922 he fully entered the Buber/Rosenzweig orbit and became their most trusted assistant for their famous Bible translation.

If Strauss was attracted to Rosenzweig's intense intellectual curiosity, Glatzer was attracted to Buber's humanist theology, whose anthropocentrism Strauss skewered as a kind of atheism since it "absolutized" the human. Despite these differences in Jewish descent and worldview, the postcards Strauss sent Glatzer indicate that he was very eager to study with him. They read the Book of Joshua and the prophets with Rashi's commentaries and exchanged instruction in Plato for instruction in Abravanel. On March 10, 1925, Strauss writes from Kassel a witty letter in Hebrew to his "dear teacher and friend," complaining of the ignorance of the local Jews and saying that he keeps afloat with the help of Dalman's Talmudic dictionary.

Leo Strauss

DREW FRIEDMAN / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

When the correspondence resumes in 1936, both are in England and the German-Jewish world is being destroyed. Glatzer had done his doctorate with Buber, Tillich, and the orientalist Joseph Horowitz in 1931, and in 1932 became Buber's successor at the University of Frankfurt. But he left for Palestine when Hitler came to power the following year. He started to teach at the Reali School in Haifa and continued to produce books for Salman Schocken's new publishing house, which was still operating in Berlin.

Strauss had gone to Berlin in 1925, written his books on Spinoza (1925-28) and Maimonides (1928-32), and become interested in Hobbes. With the help of Carl Schmitt he received a Rockefeller grant to study in Paris, but the pull of Hobbes and the threat of Hitler induced Strauss to move with his family to London in 1934. He spent his days in the British Museum studying Hobbes. In 1935, he was living in Cambridge. His book on Hobbes was finished, and he wrote to Alexandre Kojève in Paris: "The economic situation is serious. I have a grant until 1 October, which does not exceed the minimum for bare existence. . . . Where we turn, only the gods know. I have no luck, dear Mr. Kochevnikoff."

It was not bad luck, however, but his intellectual probity and uncompromising pursuit of truth that proved to be the impediment to his professional advancement. In Berlin, Schocken had just published Strauss's book on Maimonides, *Philosophy and Law*. It anticipated his Maimonides bomb of 1938. On March 29, 1935, Gershom Scholem wrote to Walter Benjamin:

> Very soon, Schocken . . . is publishing a book by Leo Strauss (whom I tried very hard to get appointed in Jerusalem). The book begins—with admirable courage given that everyone will understand this to be the book of a candidate for Jerusalem—with an unfeigned and copiously (if madly) argued affirmation of atheism as the most important Jewish watchword. . . . I admire the moral courage and regret the obviously consciously and deliberately provoked suicide of such a capable mind.

Indeed, the chair in Jerusalem went to a safer, more conservative man.

In the summer of 1936 Strauss was so keen on seeing Glatzer in Cambridge that he showed up at the train station on the wrong day. He wrote how much he wanted to see him: Any

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day was fine "but Sunday is the *cheapest* day." In 1937 his situation was desperate. On January 29 he wrote to Glatzer that he was consumed with worries and buried under work. He had finished editing the last volume of the Mendelssohn edition assigned to him and was looking for a new grant that would prevent his having to return to Germany in September. It occurred to him to ask Glatzer to approach Schocken, who had moved to Palestine in 1934:

> Are you on the kind of footing with Schocken that will allow you to speak to him about me? You know what I am capable of and what I am incapable of. . . . You know my earlier publications. ... If I had a moment's peace I'd now write the book about the Moreh that I told you about in London. If you can arrange it, I urge you to speak with Schocken.

In a footnote, Strauss clarified that he planned to write "*über die Geheimlehre des Moreh und den Sinn der Esoterik überhaupt*" ("about the secret teachings of the Moreh"—Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed*—"and the meaning of esotericism in general). He seemed to have been unaware that his first book on Maimonides had ruined his chances in Jerusalem, and that a book about Maimonides's Moreh as a work of heretical philosophy would finish him altogether for the conventional Jewish world.

Glatzer, of course, did speak to Schocken, and Strauss thanked him for his speedy assistance. But it turned out that he was able to start a research fellowship at Columbia in the fall of 1937. In early 1938, the Glatzers, too, came to America. Strauss and Glatzer met again in New York. As the copious and substantial letters to Jacob Klein reveal, Strauss was now deeply engaged in working on his Maimonides bomb. He was figuring out just how Maimonides wrote esoterically, that is to say, duplicitously, in order to hide his thoughts from the uninitiated.

In July 1938 he finished his essay on Maimonides's esoteric technique of writing that finally turned Strauss into a Straussian—and, as he could see during his conversation with Glatzer, would mean departing from the Jews. In his brilliant February 8 letter to Glatzer, Strauss indicated that he knew what he was doing. It's a letter that recapitulates their history together and marks Glatzer as a sane Akiva and Strauss as the infamous heretic Elisha ben Abuyah, who went mad when he entered the "paradise" of full knowledge:

> Our conversation today hurt you. May I tell you that I was pleased with that for your sake, however painful it is for my sake? You would not be the man I . . . esteem so highly if this "revelation" had left you indifferent or had pleased you.

I could feel myself falling through the rabbit hole of time and right into Strauss's thoughts. To be that close to the handwriting was to hear the scratch of the pen and feel the movement of the hand and to want to know the ideas that moved it.

> Now I would like to remind you of an impressive sentence in your last book: namely that the possibility represented by Elisha ben Abuyah, which was illegitimate in his own time . . . became legitimate at a later time. Accept this sentence in all seriousness and you admit that there is a place among our people even for the fully understood Rambam; that is, a place among our people for the quite dangerous (but fairly rare) possibility of the philosopher.

Strauss was pleading with Glatzer not to cut him off from the Jews, as Spinoza had been cut off. By mentioning ben Abuyah's fate he played on Glatzer's assertion that ben Abuyah's thinking "pointed toward a path that gained legitimacy only much later in Jewish intellectual history." More important, he invoked the passage in the Talmudic tractate Hagiga 15b that shows ben Abuyah in a Jewish house of study, Greek books falling out of his lap when he gets up.

Writing to Klein a week later, Strauss admitted that he was dismantling normative Judaism; but with Glatzer he pleaded not to be cast out. As part of his defense, Strauss asked Glatzer whether he did not consider Jewish thoughts and principles to be securely established.

> Because where is there today the kind of temptation to apostasy that existed in earlier eras . . . ? Is the non-Jewish world not one of horror-inducing desolation? In the last century the "revelation" [of Maimonides's philosophical skepticism] would have been a crime, but in our century it had to be made for our, the Jews', sake. . . . I understand your feelings perhaps better than I wish to express. What I would like to ask of you is that you interpret my intentions *lekaf zekhut* [toward the side of merit rather than demerit]—despite everything.

It was a powerful plea. Glatzer remained his friend, but Strauss was never quite as open with him. Several more letters were exchanged, and they were always cordial; but it is clear that Glatzer and Strauss were moving in different worlds. The German-Jewish matrix that had kept these two very different minds in a tension-filled, creative dialogue dropped away in America. When it became clear, after the end of World War II, that no return to prewar German-Jewish intensity was possible, the two moved full speed along the trajectories they had embarked on in the 1920s. Glatzer became a professor of Jewish studies at Brandeis. An unfettered Strauss was propelled forward by his discovery of esotericism, reinvigorating the study of political philosophy from Herodotus to Hobbes and beyond at the University of Chicago—and as conspiracy theorists would have us believe, directing American foreign policy from his quiet grave. ♦

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B&A

Love Is in the Ether

A Manhattanite plays the electronic field.

BY NATALIE AXTON

After 16 years of New York City apartment living, I bought a house in Westchester County. I am very happy with this decision. The house, a 1935 Cape, is charming; it will be more charming once I renovate it. Currently the house needs a new kitchen, two new baths, some ceiling, some floor, a little paint, a lot of plaster, and a new septic tank. But I love it.

Few of my friends are interested in what the broker listed as my "diamond in the rough." Most are alarmed I'm moving in: It's not the house, it's the solitude, they say. I am in my middle thirties and single. The girls' reproach is: You'll never meet anyone in the suburbs. To which I respond: Nonsense. These days everyone meets online.

The Internet dating site eHarmony is known for its compatibility questionnaire, an online form designed to deter those looking for casual relationships. The procedure is long and boring. If you lose concentration you can screw up. Drinking *gavi di gavi* with girlfriends while you fill it out is a guarantee you'll lose concentration. The next day I went online and learned that I was a religious Muslim who drinks frequently, sometimes in my favorite bathtub. Interestingly, I was very popular.

Men began contacting me through the site, and in return I investigated their profiles. The men who "Matched" with me lived throughout the New York metro area, came in every skin color, and ranged in age between 32 and 45. They had one thing in common: According to eHarmony, I am compatible with men who hold technical jobs. This is not what I expected. If you believe the science behind the compatibility questionnaire (I don't), this means that all the time I've spent with editors, novelists, playwrights, and historians was truly nonproductive. I should have been looking for a guy like Tom, who posted a picture of himself opening the Nasdaq. Or Chris, who archives anime when he isn't building information networks.

'You seem like a quality woman . . .'

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I'm happy to try new things. There is, however, a trade-off: None of my literary pals would ever approach me in writing with "I'm looking forward to exploring the possibilities with you." Not what I had in mind when I checked "verbal intimacy" as a must in my relationships. The same goes for "You seem like a quality woman." I don't know what that means. Perhaps it's what one Match meant when he described his ideal partner as "STD-free and she MUST HAVE SEXY FEET." You have to admire a man who knows what he wants.

As a woman with less exacting criteria, I confront a tremendous volume of the possibilities. Every day a new batch of "Matches" appears in my inbox, many ready to "communicate." There must be a lot of single tech guys in New York, and they produce a lot of bad copy. It's hard to keep up. On the bright side, I could start a consulting firm with all the engineering contacts I now have. Ditto financial services. Overwhelmed, I called my brother, who also uses the site. His advice: "You just have to turn it off." Still, he thinks meeting online is better than meeting in a bar, where it's difficult to start a conversation. With online dating, he said, "When you meet up you can always talk about eHarmony." Again, not my idea of appropriate "verbal intimacy," but if a girl in San Francisco can meet a nice guy like my brother through the site, why not give it a try?

I changed my religion from Muslim to "neither religious, nor spiritual," toned down the floozy factor on my profile, and settled in. I picked three men to contact, the first three Matches who didn't list the iPod as a cherished item.

Guy Number One was good looking, but in conversation he stuck to three topics: his fitness level, his family's fertility, and his desire to have children. His interest in me was limited to my fitness level, my family's fertility, and my willingness to have children. I'd like to go out; I don't want to be a breeding experiment. That ruled out Number One. Guy Number Two was less awkward, and funny on the phone. We arranged to meet in person—three times. Number Two always canceled, the last time because he got tickets to an adult puppet show. A man who prefers puppets to women? Strike Number Two. Guy Number Three seemed normal, if a little Type A. He asked me to meet him at 9 A.M. on a Saturday. I reluctantly agreed. Then I overslept. Sorry, Number Three—and best of luck.

It's been fun to point and click, but meeting all these virtual dates takes real time. And it's not cheap. I have a house to renovate, so I suspended my account. Besides, my contractor is single and pretty cute. More important, he thinks I bought a really great house. ♦

Natalie Axton writes about dance in New York and blogs at www.howdotheymove.com.

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PARODY

"With the exception of core Obama Administration loyalists, most politically engaged elites have reached the same conclusions: The White House is in over its head, isolated, insular, arrogant and clueless about how to get along with or persuade members of Congress, the media, the business community or working-class voters."

—Mark Halperin*, Time, *October 11, 2010

Y, OCTOBER 19, 2010 ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

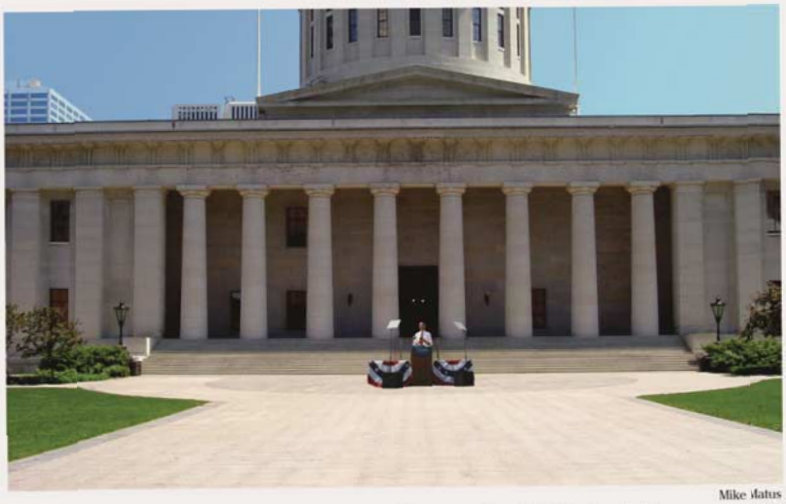
WHITE HOUSE MAINTAINS OBAMA 'NOT UNPOPULAR'

Massive Rallies Set for Ann Arbor, D.C., Upper West Side

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration vigorously refuted media claims that struggling Democratic candidates are distancing themselves from the president. "Categorically false," said White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, who made the case to reporters yesterday that Mr. Obama is more popular than ever. "First," he explained, "the president is still campaigning all over the country. This week he'll be in Ann Arbor and Hyde Park. And next week he'll be in New York City to help his friend Sen. Charles Schumer in his critical reelection bid, then back to the District for the crucial mayoral race to support…the guy…who beat…the bald guy."

When asked to explain Obama's sagging poll numbers, particularly among likely voters, Gibbs was incredulous. "I don't know what polls you're looking at. The polling we've seen indicates the president is more loved than ever." At which point Gibbs announced Obama would be receiving this year's Teen Choice Award for coolest president ever, a Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Award for "bestest" president ever, and even a Blockbuster Entertainment Award. "It's been almost ten years since they gave out a Blockbuster," said Gibbs, "so the president is quite thrilled to finally join the ranks of Jim Carrey, Neve Campbell, and Haley Joel Osment."



Mike Matus

Sparse crowds that greeted the president for a rally at Ohio's statehouse on October 14 were due to "scheduling errors," said spokesperson Robert Gibbs.

Finally, Gibbs revealed an October surprise: "I am pleased to announce, just in time for the election, a special commemorative DVD of Election 2008, complete with highlights from Denver and Berlin and, yes, the First Dance." He added, "If Americans act now, they'll receive an additional special features DVD that includes commentary from the president and David Axelrod, outtakes, and deleted scenes, including what the president and first lady ate on Inauguration Day."

In response to a reporter who asked if these weren't all examples of how the president is increasingly out of touch with voters, Gibbs said, "Did I mention the companion DVD, 'Veeps Gone Wild,' featuring an uncensored Joe

Continued on Page A3

Paladino Invites Rival Cuomo To 'Friendly' Dinner, Suggests Veal

Police Find Gun Taped to Toilet in Men's Room

the weekly Standard
OCTOBER 25, 2010

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